A MODEL FOR RENEWAL
IN A NEIGHBORHOOD
CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

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This qualitative study focused on how the ministry of a small neighborhood church was impacted by changes in leadership. The congregation participated in an eight week class on Family Systems Theory. The hypothesis was when the congregation addressed the changes—the death of the founding pastor, his wife becoming the pastor, and the assistant pastor's departure—the congregants would commit to minister to the needs of the neighborhood and become an open and inclusive church. The results indicated a transformation in the attitude and behavior of the participants regarding neighborhood ministry and inclusiveness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, Payton and Lorzee Reed. They have transitioned to heaven and are in the presence of the Lord. Your love and care for me and our family enabled me to accept and walk in God's will for my life. You were an example of love, courage and faith and I thank God He chose you to be my parents. I will always love you.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BFST   *Bowen Family Systems Theory*

FST   *Family Systems Theory*

NIV   *New International Version*

NKJ   *New King James Version*

NRSV   *New Revised Standard Version*

TICIM   *Triumphant in Christ International Ministries*

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INTRODUCTION

The neighborhood church serves a vital function in the community because the church is accessible. The church provides stability, spiritual needs and services people may not receive otherwise. Triumphant in Christ International Ministries (TICIM), which is the context of this research project, has been marginally connected to the neighborhood. The outreach ministries have not focused on areas in the neighborhood that would attract new members, and neighborhood ministry has been minimal. I believe a sound theological foundation, preaching and teaching of the word of God are prevalent in the context, but the neighborhood surrounding TICIM is not reaping the benefits. The context has experienced significant changes in leadership the past nine years, and this research will examine how the changes may have affected the congregation.

The changes that occurred in the context of this project were unplanned and the death of the founding pastor was unexpected and tragic for the church. The founding pastor died in December 2005 and his wife was elected pastor in January 2006. The assistant pastor and some of his family left to plant a church in October 2013. The church continued to function, but not at the level that it purposed or desired to function. The church did not consistently pursue its vision of "Reaching Out to Impact, Equip and Demonstrate the Power of God through Excellence."

This project provided an opportunity for the congregation to collectively examine the impact the changes in leadership had on the ministry, and to discuss and plan the direction of the ministry. Bowen's Family Systems Theory is the theoretical foundation of this research. Murray Bowen, a psychiatrist, developed this theory while working with the families of his schizophrenic patients at Georgetown University. "Bowen's Family Systems Theory is a theory of human behavior that views the family as an emotional unit and uses systems thinking to describe the complex interactions in the unit."[1] A congregation is not a family, but often functions like a family, and biblically the church is referred to as the family of God. The concepts of Bowen's Family Systems Theory (BFST) are effective with congregations and other systems because ". . . individuals cannot be understood apart from the human systems in which they participate."[2] Systems theory views a system as a whole rather than individual parts that make up a whole. "The systemic approach includes the belief that, when we change our part in a relationship process, others will then have to change their part."[3]

Edwin Friedman, a rabbi and family therapist, studied under Murray Bowen. "Friedman related Bowen Family Systems Theory (BFST) to ministry and congregational leadership . . ."[4] In his book *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue*, Friedman applies the principles of Bowen Family Systems Theory to

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[1] The Bowen Center, "Bowen Theory," accessed April 18, 2014, http://www.thebowencenter.org/theory.html.

[2] Daniel G. Bagby, "Book Reviews," *Review and Expositor*, 102, (Summer 2005):517.

[3] Ronald W. Richardson, "Bowen Family Systems Theory and Congregational Life," *Review and Expositor*, 102, (Summer 2005):381, accessed March 30, 2014, ATLAS EBSCOhost.

[4] Lawrence E. Matthews, "Bowen Family Systems Theory: A Resource for Pastoral Theologians," *Review and Expositor*, 102, (Summer 2005):426, accessed March 30, 2014, Atlas EBSCOhost.

families, individuals, congregations and other systems but uses the terms family systems theory, family therapy, and the family model to describe his work and philosophy.[5] BFST has eight interconnecting concepts. Friedman identified five "interrelated concepts to distinguish the family model from the individual model [traditional therapy]. They are . . . the identified person, the concept of homeostasis (balance), differentiation of self, the extended family field, and emotional triangles."[6]

The congregation was taught the five concepts Friedman presented to reinforce awareness of our resilience, to learn how to function meaningfully as a church, and to prepare to minister to and accept new people. The hypothesis was when the congregants of the context identified and acknowledged the impact of the changes it has experienced in the past nine years, the church would be transformed and become inclusive and pursue its vision. The leadership embraced the project and that is a major step in the transformation process.

The first five chapters of this dissertation consist of the foundational research that support and legitimate the project. Chapter One is Ministry Focus and I discuss how my personal, educational and spiritual experiences led to the project. The areas of concern in the context and proposed changes are also discussed.

In Chapter Two the Biblical Foundations for the project are presented. They relate to spiritual growth and evangelism. In Chapter Three, the Historical Foundation, I demonstrate how the radical changes in a few people revolutionized the church during the Great Awakening. Salvation is the Theological Foundation and in Chapter Four I explain

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[5] Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 1985) 19.

[6] Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 19.

why salvation is the impetus of the project. In Chapter Five the history and application of the Theoretical Foundation are outlined.

Chapter Six is the Project Analysis which includes the methodology, the implementation of the project and analysis of data. The results of the research and future recommendations will be included in this chapter.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Bible study and other small study groups promote growth and spiritual maturity in the church. The people participating in these groups have an opportunity to ask questions and participate in discussions as they learn the word of God. Relationships are formed and nurtured, and the participants gain confidence as their faith is strengthened. The author has benefited from Bible study classes, Sunday school, and other small groups, and currently teaches the New Members Orientation Class at Triumphant in Christ International Ministries. As an Associate Minister at this church, the author has many responsibilities, but teaching is her call. She believed the New Members Orientation Class could be expanded to include established members of the church, especially those who have not completed the class. The vision of Triumphant in Christ International Ministries is, "Reaching Out to Impact, Equip, and Demonstrate the Power of God through Excellence." The church has several outreach ministries, but a core group of members, mainly the ministers, work these ministries. The author believes the revised New Members class will prepare and motivate the congregation to get involved with the outreach ministries, thereby, fulfilling the vision. The author is energized when teaching the Bible and motivated to learn more and receive from others in the class. The author is called to teach and evangelize.

As a child, the author wanted to be a school teacher because some of her aunts were teachers and she admired teachers. The thought of being a minister and teaching the Bible never occurred to her, although church was a major part of the author's life. God had a plan, and the author was active in church from a young age. God spoke to her about many things in her youth, but the author did not recognize His voice. The author stayed busy with church activities, but there was no significant spiritual growth. This is not a criticism because the church provided a place for young people to go and be taught the word of God, and have fun with appropriate activities and supervision. The teachings were not integrated into the personal lives of the youth or the lives of the adults, so it fell on deaf ears. The author's commitment to God waned in college because there were many messages, ideas, and philosophies to consider and Christianity did not seem to work. The author believed some of the lies because she did not know the truth. God's word is truth, and the author could not stand on His word because her knowledge was very basic and elementary. The author earned a Bachelor of Arts in Social Science and went to graduate school that fall and received a Master of Science in Education.

The author has worked professionally with youth and their families providing social services, protective services, and counseling. The author has had the opportunity to minister to children and their families, and to refer them to churches in their neighborhoods where they could receive spiritual support. As the author matured spiritually, she realized the theories of counseling that are most effective are the ones that are spiritually based. Group therapy was the primary modality the author used in working with youth and their families, along with individual counseling. The author was being prepared for the call of God on her life through her vocation as a counselor. Jesus took

fishermen and made them his disciples and they became fishers of men. God took what He has given the author and equipped her to teach the word of God utilizing varied platforms and methods, especially Bible study and small groups. The author was not aware that she was called by God to be a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and she received a Master's degree in Education instead of Divinity, Theology, or a related area. God made it possible for the author to receive a higher degree, the Doctor of Ministry, through United Theological Seminary, and she is grateful.

The author is passionate about Bible study because it has been a lifeline for her and her family. The church has always been a refuge; a place to learn and grow, to be accepted, encouraged, and find joy and peace. The author has experienced problems and conflict in the church, but it is still the place to be. When the author experienced family problems, the church was that place of refuge, and the word of God was strength and guidance. The word that was taught was life changing, especially in Sunday school and Bible study. The circumstances did not change, but the author began to change and mature as a believer in Christ. The author decided to say what God said about her and act like who He said she was. It was a process, it is a process. The author decided to take the Good News, which is the word of God, and embrace it because the other voices and words were draining the life out of her. Now God has given the author the opportunity to give to others what He is giving her.

Ministry has come forth from the author's life experiences. Discipleship is important to the author because she was discipled and mentored and it was effective. People's lives are changed by the truth of God's word and demonstration of His love, power, and acceptance. The founding pastor of Triumphant in Christ International

Ministries taught the New Members Orientation Class and the author completed the class three times. The author was asked to teach this class, and the pastor did not attend the class, but he was available when needed. Initially, the author had questions and needed him to answer questions some of the members asked. The class was a blessing, and the people responded to the word of God. Their church attendance increased, and they became involved with different ministries at the church. One of the most rewarding aspects of small group studies is hearing what God is saying to the people as they share in discussion. The challenge for this class has been that an increasing number of people do not complete the class or they miss several classes and it takes months to complete the class. Because of this, some people were in leadership positions and they had not completed the orientation class. The congregation is small in number, and there have been periods of time when the class did not meet because there were no new members. However, there are members who have not completed the class who could take advantage of that time.

Triumphant in Christ International Ministries is located in Memphis, Tennessee in an establish neighborhood that is predominantly African-American. The church was founded by Pastor Willie Collins and his wife, Carolyn Collins, in 1989. According to the 2010 United States Census, the population is 27,222, and the average household income is $21,664.00. There are several churches within a two mile radius of the church. The immediate area surrounding the church is rundown and in need of restoration. People who are homeless, people with substance abuse issues, and mental health issues, go from church to church asking for money and food. Some of them attend church services, but only to get what they want at that time. The TICIM has reached out into the surrounding

community, the City of Memphis, and the world, and the church wants to continue to fulfill its God ordained vision. Pastor Collins passed in 2005, and his wife, Carolyn Collins, was elected pastor of the church in January 2006. Andrew Cole, a founding member of the church was elected Assistant Pastor in 2007. He and his immediate family left the congregation in October 2013 to plant a church.

The church is located on a corner lot in a well-traveled area and is physically visible. Triumphant in Christ International Ministries has ministered to the community, but has not attracted new members. The outreach ministries currently operating at the church are: Intercessory Prayer, Men, Women, Nursing Home, Prison, and the Philippines Ministries. There is also a Youth and Music Ministry. The Men and Women Ministries each have one major event a year, the Mother-Daughter Tea and Men's prayer breakfast or brunch, respectively. The Health and Fitness Ministry began in January 2015 and meets once month. Time is designated for intercessory prayer before Sunday school and Bible study, but intercessory prayer is ongoing. The Nursing Home and Prison Ministries are monthly. A group from the church visited the Philippines in 2006, and Pastor Carolyn Collins pledged continued spiritual and financial support to the Philippine Ministry.

Currently, the same members work the outreach ministries and have accepted the responsibility to carry this ministry forth. The congregation supports the outreach ministry, and gives financially to the ministry, but the majority do not directly participate in the ministry. The Associate Ministers of the church have been assigned to direct an outreach ministry, and all of them participate in various ministries. The author believes the church needs to be strengthened from within to effect positive changes in the

community. The members need to be revitalized and stirred up about the vision God has given Triumphant in Christ International Ministries. It is not practical to expect every member of the congregation to go to the prison and nursing home, however more people need to be actively involved because there is much to do in the church community. When people are involved in ministry they learn how to minister and they demonstrate their faith. James 2:20b reads, ". . . . faith without works is dead." The congregation will also take ownership of the vision the more involved they are, and believe it is God's vision for the church. Faith demands action and commitment.

The New Members Class was restructured for this project and all of the congregation was asked to participate in an eight week class on Family Systems Theory developed by Murray Bowen. The class met Sunday mornings from 9:45 to 10:45 and was called "The Kingdom Builders Class." In the class the congregation examined the identity of the church and the impact of the changes experienced in the last nine years. Through honest discussion the congregants processed how stability was maintained and what was needed to become a transforming church. TICIM purposes to be "Kingdom Builders" in the community and beyond by carrying out the vision God gave us, "Reaching Out to Impact, Equip, and Demonstrate the Power of God through Excellence."

Dr. Roberta Gilbert, a protégé of Murray Bowen, stated, "In family systems theory the focus is on what is happening and how one can, by changing self, make it different and better. . . . Because we are always dealing with an emotional unit, and each of us is only a part of it, no one is to blame."[1] By looking at Triumphant in Christ

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[1] Roberta M. Gilbert, M.D. *Extraordinary Leadership: Thinking Systems, Making a Difference* Leading Systems Press, (Fall Church, VA : Leading Systems Press, 2006), 10.

International Ministries as a whole system rather than as persons, personalities or issues, the congregants could participate in the class without a sense of blame or condemnation.

In the class, Religious Leadership in a Pluralistic World, at United Theological Seminary, Dr. Felicia LaBoy stated, "Three thousand people didn't come to the church in one day by strategizing, but by the Holy Spirit."[2] In Acts 2:14-36 the restored Peter preached and three thousand people were added to the church. Peter was prepared to proclaim the gospel because he had been Jesus' disciple and was taught by Jesus. Peter was full of the Holy Spirit, spoke boldly, and was committed to the work of the Lord. Peter preached the word and the Holy Spirit did the work, and the Holy Spirit is doing the same today. The work of this project has helped prepare the congregation of the context to be receptive to change and has renewed their understanding of commitment to ministry. As we change and become whole we affect the community and this is evangelism at its best.

Upon completion of the class, the participants went to a housing development near the church and invited the residents to join them for a continental breakfast and church services on Sunday morning and Bible Study Tuesday on evenings. The residents were given a card with the service times and contact information, and children were given coloring books, activity books and crayon. When there was an opportunity, the Gospel and prayer were shared with the people. The author believes that Triumphant in Christ International Ministries will develop a relationship with the people in the community and expand that relationship to the churches in the area.

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[2] Felicia LaBoy, "Religious Leadership in a Pluralistic World" (lecture, United Theological Seminary, Ohio, August 21, 2014).

The church building is a Family Life Center and can accommodate a large number of people and various activities. Space is available for community meetings, health fairs, basketball games and numerous events that may benefit the neighborhood. People will come to a place where their needs are met, and Triumphant in Christ International Ministries is that place. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit and creative planning, the community will know this church is here for them.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Old Testament Isaiah 61: 1-2

Isaiah 61:1-2 are joyous prophetic scriptures with a missionary message. The speaker professes to be anointed and sent by God to bring good news to the poor and oppressed, to heal, to liberate, and to comfort. The body of Christ is called to do the same today. The Doctor of Ministry Project will prepare the congregation at Triumphant in Christ International Ministries to go out into the community and share this good news. This research will demonstrate how changes in congregational leadership can effect evangelism and church growth.

The book of Isaiah received its name from the prophet Isaiah ben Amoz. This name means "Yahweh saves." Isaiah is related to both Joshua and Hosea. The Bible reveals virtually nothing about Isaiah's family of origin other than he was the son of Amoz and had two or more sons. Isaiah ben Amoz was active during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah over Judah, however, his ministry did not begin until the last year of King Uzziah's reign. Like other prophets, Isaiah possessed a heart devoted to God and a strong sense of calling. His dramatic encounter with the Lord . . . laid a foundation for his prophetic ministry. He possessed great courage and conviction. Isaiah knew his God and he knew what his God had called him to do.

According to John Oswalt, the book of Isaiah "contains an unparalleled sweep of theology, all the way from creation to the new heavens and new earth and from utter destruction to glorious redemption."[1] Beyer stated, "Isaiah uttered words that had primary application for his own generation (forth telling), but he also predicted a great day God would bring about (foretelling). His message focused on Judah but was global in its scope."[2] "The book of Isaiah addresses many issues, but certain themes appear repeatedly. Five of the most significant themes are remnant, the sovereignty of God, the servant, the Holy One of Israel, and the Messiah."[3]

The historical events of the eighth and sixth centuries B.C.E. are significant in the interpretation of the book of Isaiah. It has been widely accepted that the book of Isaiah has two or three sections and two or three authors. Oswalt stated, "[the book of Isaiah] seems to be addressed to at least two, and perhaps three, different settings. The first of these is that of Isaiah's times, from about 740 to 700 B.C. But Chapters 40-55 seem to be addressed to the Judean exiles in Babylon between 585 and 540 B.C., and chapters 56-66 seem to reflect conditions in Judah after the return from the exile in 539 B.C."[4] "Four pivotal moments in the history of the Israelite people form the background of the various parts of Isaiah. They are:

> 1. The Syro-Ephraimite war and its aftermath. After a period of relative peace between Israel (the Northern Kingdom, often called "Ephraim" in Isaiah after its most important tribe) and Judah (the Southern Kingdom), international tensions

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[1] John Oswalt, *Isaiah: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 17.

[2] Bryan E. Beyer, *Encountering the Book of Isaiah: A Historical and Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 31.

[3] Ibid., 32.

[4] Oswalt, 18.

rose when Tiglath-pileser III became king of the Assyrian empire in 745 BCE and began an effort to conquer the lands to the west of Assyria, including Syria, Israel, and Judah. Uzziah, the king of Judah whose reign began during the peaceful era, died in 733 (6.1), but because he was quarantined due to an illness, his son Jotham became king in 759, followed by Jotham's son Ahaz in 743 or 735. Pekah, king of Israel, and Rezin, king of Syria (Damascus or Aram) tried, beginning in 735, to enlist Ahaz in an alliance against Assyria, and when that effort failed, they attacked Judah to replace Ahaz with a king more amenable to their policies (ch 7). This conflict is known as the Syro-Ephraimite war, since it was a war of Syria and Ephraim against Judah. Ahaz successfully turned to Assyria for help in fending off Israel and Syria. The price was steep: Judah became a vassal of Assyria.

2. The Assyrian invasion. During the decades following the Syro-Ephraimite war, the Assyrians expanded their influence in the area, taking over Syria and then attacking the Northern Kingdom, which fell in 722. When the Assyrian ruler at the time, Sargon II, died in 705, Hezekiah, the king of Judah and son Ahaz, rebelled against Assyria. Hezekiah had thought to take advantage of the confusion at the change of rulers, and in addition sought support from Egypt that was not forthcoming (36.6). The new Assyrian king, Sennacherib, retaliated and conquered the cities surrounding Jerusalem in 701. Hezekiah was able to avert the conquest of Jerusalem itself only by paying tribute [to God in prayer].

3. The conquest of Jerusalem and the exile. During the century following these events, the Assyrian empire gradually weakened. In 612, the rising Babylonian empire conquered the Assyrian capital, Nineveh, and the international power struggle became one between Babylon and Egypt, with Judah caught between. In 605 the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, defeated the Egyptian pharaoh, Neco, at the battle of Carchemish, and Babylon became the leading empire of the day. Judah came under Babylon's control, and when the last king of Judah, Zedekiah, rebelled against Babylon, the result was an invasion by Nebuchadnezzar. In 586 he destroyed Jerusalem and its Temple and deported a good deal of the population to Babylon, an event referred to as the exile.

4. The return. During the sixth century BCE, the Babylonians were increasingly challenged by the rise of another great empire, the Persians. In 539 Cyrus, the Persian king, defeated the Babylonians at the battle of Opis. Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Judah, and many (though not all) eventually did so. The returning exiles rebuilt Jerusalem and the Temple.[5]

These were tumultuous times for the Israelites and God's provision and protection

was evident in spite of His repeated call for repentance.

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[5] Marvin A. Sweeney, Isaiah: Historical Context, in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha,* 4th ed., ed. Michael D. Coogan, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 965-966.

"The authorship of the book of Isaiah came into question in the eighteenth century, but scholars had long noted the absence of historical references after chapter 39. They also noted certain stylistic and vocabulary differences between chapters 1-39 and 40-66. In 1775 a German scholar was the first to print that the present book might consist of two different works."[6] But in 1892, Bernhard Duhm published a commentary on the Trito-Isaianic hypothesis which had a surprisingly large measure of success.[7] According to David Petersen:

> Duhm distinguished three major corpora (chaps. 1-39; 40-55; and 56-66). In the work that followed, an almost formulaic consensus emerged, represented by the labels First, Second, and Third Isaiah. The argument ran like this: Chapters 1-39 derived primarily from the hand (or at least the time) of Isaiah of Jerusalem (ca. 740-700 B.C.E.), chapters 40-55 stem from the middle of the sixth century B.C.E. (ca. 550-515), and chapters 56-66 are from the end of the sixth or early part of the fifth century (ca. 515-480) after the Temple had been rebuilt. The aforementioned labels began to serve a dual purpose: They referred not only to blocks of literature but also were used to refer, implicitly, to authors (or groups of authors).[8]

Second Isaiah is also called Deutero-Isaiah.[9]

Duhm's theory was not accepted by all and continues to be challenged by scholars and theologians, many of whom believe the arguments he presented were brief and lacked substance to support his hypothesis.[10] Bradley Gregory of the University of Notre Dame wrote, "The other direction scholarship has moved since Duhm's thesis is the

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[6] Oswalt, 33.

[7] Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2003), 27.

[8] David Peterson, *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 48.

[9] Beyer, 154.

[10] Blenkinsopp, 27.

contention that not only are chs. 56-66 from a single author but that that single author is none other than Second Isaiah."[11] The debate goes on. There is also a single authorship theory, and the proponents of this theory believe that Isaiah of Jerusalem wrote the book of Isaiah. They believe in predictive prophecy; that God knows the future and can communicate it to His prophets. They concede with the multiple authorship theorists regarding the difference in subject matter in chapters one to thirty nine and forty to sixty-six.[12] "To some extent, the question of single or multiple authorship hinges at least partly on whether one allows for the existence of a God who knows the future and who can communicate it to his servants the prophets."[13] Peter Quinn-Miscall acknowledges the view of three Isaiah's, but "regards Isaiah as one book that is to be studied and read for its own sake, for what it says and presents, and not as a variety of ways of addressing different periods in Israel's history."[14]

Isaiah 61:1-2 is in Third Isaiah which comprises chapters fifty-six to sixty-six, but chapters sixty through sixty-two are considered a unit and are read and interpreted together. "There is a widespread agreement that chs. 60-62, while allowing for some later glosses, are the compositional nucleus of Third Isaiah, around which the rest of chs. 56-66 grew."[15] John Oswalt stated:

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[11] Bradley C. Gregory, "The Postexilic in the Third Isaiah: Isaiah 61:1-3 in light of the Second Temple Hermeneutics," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126, no.3 (2007): 476-477, accessed April 14, 2104, Atlas EBSCOhost.

[12] Beyer, 156.

[13] Ibid., 158.

[14] Peter D. Quinn-Miscall, *Reading Isaiah: Poetry and Vision* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 2-3.

[15] Bradley C. Gregory, *Postexilic Exile in Third Isaiah*, 478.

In a remarkable way, chapters 56-66 synthesize the teaching of the two earlier sections, showing that actual righteous living is a requirement for the servants of God (i.e., chs.1-39) but that such righteousness is only possible through the grace of God (i.e., chs. 40-55). Thus, far from being an unfortunate and miscellaneous appendix to the 'real book,' these chapters form the necessary conclusion and climax to the book's teaching. As such, they show us the expected characteristics of the life of servants of the Lord."[16]

Steven Mason believes that chapters fifty-six to sixty-six are about doing righteousness, and that righteousness is a covenant requirement that will culminate in rewards.[17]

Isaiah 61:1-2 reads:

[1]The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; [2]to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn (NRSV).

In verse one an unidentified person declares the spirit of the Lord is upon him or her and the Lord has anointed this person to carry out a great mission. The identity of this speaker is determined by one's interpretation of the scriptures in the Old and New Testaments.

"Arguing for the speaker as the Messiah-Servant (Oswalt 1998) facilitates a straightforward identification with Jesus, who applied Isa 61:1-2a (quoted according to LXX) to himself in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:18-19)."[18] "Paul D. Hanson has proposed that the passage is referring to the visionary Levitical community that is attempting to enact a program of restoration . . . and a few interpreters have taken the

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[16] Oswalt, *NIV Application Commentary*, 606-607.

[17] Steven D. Mason, "Getting a 'Handle' on Holistic Christian Mission: The Contribution of Isaiah 61 as a Discrete Old Testament Voice," *Missiology: An International Review* 40, no. 3 (July 2012): 300.

[18] Blenkinsopp, 220.

referent to be a Davidic king . . . ."[19] Joseph Blenkinsopp claims, "With relatively few

exceptions, interpreters have followed the Targum in identifying the speaker in 61:1-3 as

an individual prophet, for the simple reason that the language indicates prophetic

commissioning."[20] Robert Chisholm stated, "a close examination of the evidence points

to the servant of the Lord depicted in the earlier servant songs. Like the servant in the

songs, the speaker is empowered by the divine Spirit to free those who are imprisoned

(compare v.1 with 42:1, 7; 49:9)."[21] What is more significant than authorship is the

calling and the mission of the speaker.[22] The author of this paper agrees with Chislom

that in the progress of revelation and history, Jesus emerges as the fulfillment of the

prophecies in chapters 61, 42, and 49. Therefore, Jesus boldly identified himself with the

speaker of Isaiah 61:1-2 in Luke 4:18-21.[23]

Being anointed by the spirit of God is not unique to Chapter 61:1 and the

"language of spirit possession combined with that of mission can be found in Isaiah (cf.

6:8; 9:7; 42:19; 48;16) and elsewhere (Exod 3:13; 1Sam 15:1; 2Kgs 2:4; Jer 25:17;

26:12-15)."[24] Because the Lord anointed the speaker, the spirit of the Lord empowered

him and sent him to bring the good news of deliverance to the oppressed. The NIV

translates oppressed as poor, and Luke 4:18 uses the word poor. This is significant

because God has always championed the cause of the poor and those who are treated

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[19] Gregory, 479.

[20] Blenkinsopp, 221.

[21] Robert Chisholm, Jr., *Handbook on the Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 130.

[22] Oswalt, *NIV application Commentary*, 650.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Blenkinsopp, 221.

unjustly. Seitz stated there are seven infinitive clauses in 61:1-3 that spell out the prophet's specific function within the community.[25] The prophet's function was to announce the good news of deliverance and comfort to Zion, and to tell the people that God Himself would restore them and deliver them.

"The language of granting liberty to the captives, releasing the prisoners, and the arrival of the year of the Lord's favor is usually recognized as a reference to the year of jubilee in Leviticus 25."[26] The year of jubilee was every fiftieth year, and that year debts were forgiven, slaves were freed, and land was returned. "According to Deutero-Isaiah, because of her sins, conceived of as a debt, Israel was sold into debt-slavery (i.e., exile in Babylon). Once she had served her due, she would return to her land."[27] "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins"(Isaiah 40:2 NRSV). Bradley Gregory believes "the end result is that what was prescribed for individual Israelites in Leviticus twenty-five has been developed typologically in reference to the entire community."[28] Isaiah 61:7 states because Israel's shame was double, she will receive a double portion and everlasting joy. God declares He will make an everlasting covenant with Israel, and the remainder of the chapter describes the beauty and power of that covenant relationship.

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[25] Christopher R. Seitz, "Isaiah 60:1-62:12, Zion's Exaltation," in *The New Interpreter's Bible: General Articles and Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections for Each Book of the Bible, Including the Apocryphal Deuterocanonical Books*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2001), 6:514.

[26] Gregory, 483.

[27] Gregory, 484.

[28] Greogroy, 485.

The central motifs in Isaiah 61:1-2 are salvation and mission. Salvation is a major theme in the book of Isaiah because it records how God saved and delivered His people repeatedly in spite of their sin. God foresaw the need of salvation for humankind and provided salvation through His Son Jesus Christ. Prophecy about the Messiah, the Anointed One, began in Genesis and was revealed in the Gospels. In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus, "filled with the power of the Spirit," read Isaiah 61:1-2a in the synagogue in Nazareth. After reading it He began to speak and said, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (NRSV). The prophecy of the one who would bring the good news was fulfilled in Jesus. He not only brought the good news, but He initiated the good news and made it happen. Oswalt stated, "He [Jesus] will make of his people what they cannot make of themselves."[29]

Spender stated, "Israel understood salvation to be God's work-they saw his deliverance, cried unto the Lord for help, trusted him for it, and praised him in response. The song of salvation in Isaiah 12:2 is . . . 'The Lord, the Lord, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation" (NIV).[30] God sent His word to the Nation of Israel telling them they would be delivered from Babylon and receive double for what they lost. As a repentant, restored people, the Lord made an everlasting covenant with them and said "Their descendants shall be known among all nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed" (61:9 NRSV). The Lord's salvation will be seen on and through His people.

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[29] Oswalt, *NIV Application Commentary*, 650.

[30] Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Bakers Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker's Books, 1988), accessed February 3, 2014, Logos Bible Software.

When Jesus read Isaiah 61:1-2a in the Temple, the people received His words and expected Him to perform miracles as He had in Capernaum. Jesus did not do any miracles and said, "no prophet is accepted in his own country" (Lk 4:24 NKJ). Jesus talked about Elijah being sent to a widow in Zarephath during the famine and not to a widow in Israel. Jesus reminded them that there were many lepers in Israel, but Elisha went to Syria and Naaman was cleansed. The people in the synagogue became furious because they perceived that Jesus was saying God visited foreigners who received His message more readily than Israel. They wanted to throw him over a cliff. Jesus was declaring to Israel that God loved the Gentiles and salvation was not for Israel only, but for the world.

Mission can be defined as "a task on which God sends a person that He has called, particularly a mission to introduce another group of people to salvation in Christ."[31] In verses one and two of the text, the Lord God sent the speaker and his mission was to bring the message of salvation to an exiled people. The prophecy in chapter 61:1-8 continues by declaring restoration, prosperity, and favor with foreigners and favor with God (priest and ministers of God, everlasting covenant). The mission up to this point has been focused on Israel. Martens stated, "the Isaiah texts highlight both a centripetal ('come' structure) and a centrifugal ('go' structure) dimension."[32] Both structures were utilized in this author's doctoral project. A class was taught on the principles of Family Systems Theory to give the context an opportunity to examine the

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[31] Bob Compton, "Mission(s)," ed. Chad Brand et. al., *Holman Illustrated Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1140-1141.

[32] Elmer A. Martens, "Impulses to Mission in Isaiah: An Intertexual Exploration," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 17.2 (2007) 237, accessed January 5, 2015, Atlas EBSCOhost.

impact changes in leadership may have had on the congregation ministering the neighborhood. As a result, the participants demonstrated a commitment to go into the community and share the message of Christ. When the seed of the word of God is planted in some and watered in others, they can come to Christ and come to TICIM to be discipled.

Martens stated, "God first takes pains to ready the exhibit before urging the sending of ambassadors. Mission as witness is first a matter of 'being' and then 'sending.'[33] This is exactly what the Lord did for Israel, He made her ready for exhibition. Verse nine states, "Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the people; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed" (NRSV). God established Israel in righteousness (Isa. 3b; 10-11) and justice (Isa. 8), and nations will be drawn to her.

The centrifugal, 'go' structure is evident in Luke 4:25-27 when Jesus spoke in the synagogue about Elijah being sent to the widow at Zarephath, and Elisha healing Naaman in Syria. "Both were gentiles and both came into contact with the God of Israel through a mediator from Israel, Elijah and the servant girl, respectively. Here are two instances of Israel's becoming the vehicle for the acknowledgment of Yahweh by representatives of the nations as described (Isa 61:9)."[34]

As with the speaker in Isaiah 61:1-2, Christians are sent by the Lord to bring the good news of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ to the world. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus told His disciples to go to all the world and be witnesses for Him and He is with them always. As personal representatives for Christ, the members of the church are in the

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[33] Martens, 238.

[34] Ibid., 234.

position to draw individuals, communities, and nations to Christ by proclamation and action. As Christians are transformed by the good news and the spirit of God, as with Israel, others will know "they are a people whom the Lord has blessed" (Isa.61:9 NRSV).

New Testament Hebrews 5:11-6:3

The New Testament scriptures for this Biblical research are Hebrews 5:11-6:3. These scriptures address spiritual growth and maturity in Christians. The researcher taught a New Members Bible Study Class at Triumphant in Christ International Ministries, and the majority of the people in the class came to the church with Christian experience. The purpose of the class was to give the members a biblical foundation of Christian principles and to inform them of what TICIM believes and our church history. The name of the class was changed to the Kingdom Builders Class to accommodate this project. The curriculum was changed and the class was designed for new and established members. The class fostered fellowship, support, and unity. The desired outcome was that the participants would become familiar with the principles of Family Systems Theory and apply the principles to the changes in the congregation and their personal lives. It was also a desire that the participants would grow spiritually, and participate in the ministry.

These scriptures in Hebrews not only warn of the dangers of not continuing to adhere to God's Word, they provide instructions on what to do. Studying these scriptures helped in developing the curriculum for the Kingdom Builders Class and gave the instructor insight and knowledge to make the class more effective.

While the author of the Book of Hebrews is unknown, it is obvious that he or she was well versed in the Old Testament and the Priesthood. The author was a strong believer and follower of Jesus Christ. There are other unknowns about the Book of Hebrews. Scholars are divided about when and where the Book was written, and "whether Hebrews was written before or after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of

the Temple in 70 CE."[1] "The original recipients of this New Testament Book had a rich background in Jewish worship and thought. The author assumes his audience has an extensive knowledge of the Old Testament." ". . . Many Gentiles affiliated themselves with first-century synagogues, either as proselytes or God-fearers. Consequently, some Gentiles came to Christ with a rich background in Jewish worship and extensive knowledge of Jewish Scriptures."[2] The Book of Hebrews addresses Jews and Christians, and George Guthrie believes they "probably constituted a house church or a group of house churches in or near the city of Rome."[3] Signs and indicators of where and when the Book of Hebrews was written are found in Hebrews.

Ellingworth wrote "the writer's way of thinking and writing has been compared with that of Alexandrian writers such as Philo; but the similarities are not close, and it was in Alexandria that Hebrews was first wrongly attributed to Paul. The mention of 'our Italian friends' (Hebrews 13:24) may suggest that Hebrews was written in or near Italy."[4]

The author wrote to Jewish Christians and Gentiles who were wavering in their faith. The Jewish believers were facing persecution and were wondering if they made the right decision by becoming Christians. They were tempted to return to Judaism, and the author encouraged them to stand fast in the faith. Some scholars refer to Hebrews as a sermon rather than a letter. The author was steadfast and passionate in his appeal to the people he was talking to. Ellingworth stated, "Hebrews is not an abstract treatise but an

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[1] Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Westminster, UK: Epworth Press, 1991), viii.

[2] George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 19-20.

[3] Ibid., 20.

[4] Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, vii.

'appeal' (13:22; literally, a 'word of encouragement') addressed to real people from whom the writer hoped to be only temporarily separated (13:19)."[5]

The author uses exposition and exhortation throughout the book of Hebrews. He explains the Sonship and Priesthood of Jesus Christ and encourages Christians with the truth about their salvation. The author clearly and eloquently describes the redemptive work of Jesus and the great sacrifice He made for all. The author's language and style prompts the audience to attend to his words, and the words they had read, studied, and heard from God. Hebrews 2: 3 reads, "how can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? It was declared at first through the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him . . ." (NRSV). The Jewish Christians were also instructed to remember their experiences and successes in Christ (10:32-39). The author compared the Old Testament with the New Testament throughout Hebrews, and illustrated how the New Testament was better. The listeners had to decide to have faith in Jesus or turn away from their faith in Jesus, and the author let them know the consequences of their decision.

The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) and the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible were used in this exegesis. Hebrews five continues the exposition from Hebrews four of Jesus as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek." Then the author stops teaching about the Priesthood and confronts the audience about their lack of spiritual maturity. In v. 11 the author stated "about this," the royal Priesthood or Him (Jesus), "we have much to say that is hard to explain, since you have become dull in understanding." Arthur Pink stated, "There were many things pertaining to this order of priesthood which were of deep importance, of great value, and most necessary to know; things which concerned the glory of Christ, things which concerned the joy and

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[5] Ellingworth, xi.

consolation of His people."[6] The author was not saying that the subject was too difficult

to explain, but those he was confronting could not understand because they had become

dull their understanding. The NIV translates v.11 as, "We have much to say about this,

but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand." This

community had suffered persecution because of their spiritual beliefs. Some of their

expectations had not manifested, therefore, they had become dull or insensitive to biblical

teachings. William Lane commented on the community deviating from its earlier course

and becoming sluggish (dull) in understanding. He wrote, "It was apparently an attempt

to sidestep their responsibility in a world that persecuted them and held them in

contempt, but it threatened their integrity."[7] It is possible that they were not attentive to

the Word of God because they were more concerned about themselves, and distracted by

the events of that time. E. Schuyler English stated:

> Like men and women of our own day, these Jewish believers were taken with a
> sort of spiritual inertia. Anaesthetized by the attractions of the world, perhaps, or
> bound by the traditions of ritualistic legalism, their hearts were not susceptible to
> holy, heavenly, and eternal issues. Not that they did not believe the Gospel of
> Christ upon hearing it, but not feasting upon Him, occupied with themselves
> rather than with Christ and the immensities of divine grace, they were, as so many
> of our contemporaries are, simply uninterested in spiritual matters. Their ears
> were dull to the deeper truths of God.[8]

When believers in Christ become complacent and neglect God's Word,

immaturity and regression are inevitable. Verse twelve states, "For though by this time

you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic elements of the

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[6] Arthur Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1967), 263.

[7] William Lane, *World Biblical Commentary*, vol. 47, (Dallas, TX: Word, 1991), 135.

[8] E. Schuyler English, *Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1955), 146.

oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food" (NRSV). This verse makes it clear that

the author is speaking to people who have been Christian believers for a while and that

they have had enough teaching and experiences to be teachers by now. The author was

not referring to the gift of teaching or to leaders only, but "this is an expectation of the

congregation generally, an expectation based on time spent in faith and in fellowship."[9]

Lane states that the author of Hebrews knew that his audience was made up of mature

believers who had become lukewarm in their faith and they were not diligent about the

things of God. He wanted to get their attention and jolt them from their spiritual laziness,

and the author used strong words and sarcasm. Lane stated:

> The biblical interpretation and the presentation of Christology in 1:1-5:10
> presuppose advanced Christian instruction and a level of understanding that
> corresponds to the adult consumption of solid food and not a diet of milk. In
> addition, the writer shows no inclination to review with his hearers the
> foundational elements of the Christian faith. He clearly regarded the hearers as
> mature. He reminded them that they have ingested over a considerable period of
> time the instruction that qualified them to be teachers of others (5:12).
> Consequently, the portrayal of them as infants who have to be nurtured with milk
> is not an actual description of some or of all of the members of the community. It
> is irony, calculated to shame them and to recall them to the stance of conviction
> and boldness consonant with their experience (6:4-5) and hope (6:9-12). The
> community has deviated from its earlier course (cf. 10:32-34) by becoming
> sluggish in understanding (5:12).[10]

"Coupling reproof with assurance was common rhetorical practice. Speakers

understood that cutting remarks were to proceed out of concern for the listeners and to be

aimed to the listeners' improvement."[11] The author of Hebrews wanted the community to

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[9] Fred B. Craddock, "The Letter to the Hebrews: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Vols.* (Nashville, TN: Abington, 1998), 12:68.

[10] Lane, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 135.

[11] Craig Koester, "Hebrews, Rhetoric, and the Future of Humanity," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 64 (January 1, 2002): 117, accessed January 5, 2014, Atlas EBSCOhost.

internalize and live what they had learned. In James 1:22, Christians are called on to "be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves" (NRSV). Doing the word of God keeps the word alive and active in the hearer, and guards against becoming dull and sluggish. It is possible for a person to become "dull in understanding" as v. 11 states, and not realize it, thereby, deceiving themselves. Deception blinds the truth, and the Hebrew community could not comprehend the deeper, more profound revelations of the word of God in this state. Therefore, the author tells them they need to be "taught again the basic elements of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food" (NRSV).

The NIV translates v. 12b as, "the elementary truths of God's word," and the NEB translates v. 12b as, "the ABC of God's oracles." Victor Rhee stated, ". . . . the author of Hebrews has in mind the fundamental Christian doctrines which they received when they first believed."[12] According to English, "The very Gospel by which they had been saved was not wholly clear to these early Jewish Christians. The essence of the Gospel message is that salvation is wholly God's free gift . . . Yet these believers in the Christ of God continued to look back to and covet the sacrifices and ceremonial observances of the old covenant, failing to appreciate the liberty of the new."[13] The Christians in Hebrews could not share the Gospel with others if it was not clear and fully accepted by them. English also stated, ". . . . they continued to cherish Judaistic ceremonial law, as though Christianity was an appendage to it instead of an entirely new covenant. Faith in Christ they had, yes; but they thought they had also to follow the precepts of Moses, and this was nothing less than an effort to be saved and sealed by

[12] Victor Rhee, "Christology and the Concept of Faith in Hebrews 5:11-6:20," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 43 (January 2000): 84, accessed January 5, 2014, ATLAS EBSCOhost.

[13] English, *Study in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 147

works, which is disparaging and dishonoring to the completed work of calvary."[14] It is written in Ephesians 4:14a, "We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine" (NRSV). Many Christians today accept portions of the Christian doctrine, but like the Hebrew community, they believe they need to work and strive to receive all of the benefits of salvation. The work has been done and the price paid by the redemptive work of Jesus, and believers have to know this and live it by faith. Believers must fully realize and accept this truth or be required to be taught again and need milk, not solid food.

Lane indicates, "The source of the metaphors 'milk,' and 'solid food.' was the assimilation of education to nurture in Hellenistic popular philosophy."[15] Milk symbolizes "the elementary truths of God's word," and infancy, whereas solid food signifies maturity. The author of Hebrews wrote "anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil" (vv.13-14, NIV). Milk is nourishing for adults as well as for infants, but milk will not sustain adults. Adults have to have solid food to grow and develop properly. Infants can live on milk, and they also need someone else to care for them. All Christians begin their spiritual lives with milk, but have to change their diet in order to mature and ".... have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:18-19, NRSV).

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[14] English, 148.

[15] Lane, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 137.

Richard Phillips suggests that the author is saying:

"The hallmark of spiritual infants, he says, is that they are 'unskilled in the word of righteous,' or as the New International Version puts it, 'not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.' This could refer to the moral rectitude, our need for righteous conduct, but it more likely refers to the righteousness that comes from God in the gospel through the work of Jesus Christ and is received by faith. This is what he was writing about before launching into the reproof. In Hebrews 5:8-10 he wrote about Christ's obedience that perfected him for the role of Savior. By means of his righteous, Christ became 'the source of eternal salvation' and was consecrated as our high priest.[16]

Paul wrote in Romans 1:17, "For in it (the gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'The one who is righteous will live by faith'. Romans 10:17 declares "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ." The word of righteousness cannot be understood by the babe in Christ because the revelation comes by faith and hearing the word of God concerning righteousness repeatedly. With the desire to know the word and the power of the Holy Spirit, the believer can comprehend elementary or advanced spiritual principals. Spiritual maturity is a process, and believers must be consistent and diligent in seeking spiritual growth.

It was mentioned earlier that we must be doers of the word and not hearers only (James 1:22 NKJ). Verse fourteen states that "solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil." This scripture could be understood to mean Christians became mature by constant use and practice of the word of God. However, the author seems to be saying that when a Christian matures, then he/she are able to partake of solid food, the advanced spiritual principals. When the

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[16] Richard Phillips, *Hebrews* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing Company, 2006), 178.

advanced spiritual principals are constantly used or practiced, the believer can distinguish between good and evil. English writes:

> Mature Christians, Christians who are developed spiritually, are those who have assimilated the milk and have partaken of the meat. When the meat is fed upon, so that it strengthens the man, he is able to discern both good and evil-good and evil in the world, good and evil in deportment, and good and evil in doctrine also. And if he observes these discriminations, surely he will act upon them in obedience to the Word of God."[17]

The author wanted the community to be prepared to make sound decisions when they were faced with the issues of that time, and spiritual maturity was necessary to do so. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:14-15, "We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (NRSV). The author knew the community needed to comprehend the priesthood of Christ to steadfastly live by faith, and to share their faith. Therefore, he admonished them to feed on the meat, which is the word of God, distinguish good from evil, and go forth.

Hebrews 6:1-3 states "Therefore let us go on toward perfection, leaving behind the basic teaching about Christ, and not laying again the foundation: repentance from dead works and faith toward God, instruction about baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And we will do this, if God permits" (NRSV). ". . . . The basic elements of the oracles of God" in 5:12 are called "the basic teachings about Christ" in 6:1 (NRSV). Ellingworth and other authors and commentators agree "the basic teachings of Christ" is literally translated 'the word of the beginning of

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[17] English, 150-151.

Christ.' "Some have thought that this refers, not to Jesus, but to Jewish teaching about the Messiah."[18] The author of Hebrews was not suggesting the community abandon or neglect the basic teachings of Christ, but to use them as the foundation on which to build and move toward perfection. A foundation is not to be laid repeatedly, but is a base to build upon.

The basic teachings of Christ or the elementary teachings about Christ (NIV) are grouped in three pairs. "Repentance from dead works" is paired with "faith toward God." Phillips stated, "That is the great theme of this whole letter: holding fast to the way of salvation offered by God through faith in Christ. True repentance always leads to saving faith; . . . . Put together, this most basic layer of the foundation corresponds to the doctrine of justification."[19]

The next pair is "instruction about baptisms, and laying on of hands." The NIV translation is instruction about cleansing rites and the laying on of hands. According to Ellingworth, "cleansing rites is probably the correct translation of a word which is literally 'baptisms', and which probably refers to repeated ritual washings practiced in Judaism (see Judith 12.7ff)."[20] Phillips stated:

> Instead of the normal word for Christian baptism, *baptisma*, he used *baptismon*, which more generally describes washings or ablutions. Meanwhile, the laying on of hands in the New Testament era was associated with blessing, healing, and especially ordination for office. In general, hands were laid on to signify the coming of the Holy Spirit. Taken together, washings and laying on of hands have to do with our empowerment for the Christian life; that is, they point us to sanctification.[21]

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[18] Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 45.

[19] Phillips, *Hebrews*, 181.

[20] Ellingworth, 45.

[21] Phillip, 182.

The third pair is "the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment." Phillips stated "Essential to the Christian hope is the resurrection that awaits us after the grave, the hope of glory. Indeed, all the dead will be raised in the great day of judgment; those who are in Christ will be received with joy while all who reject him are condemned forever in their sins."[22]

Justification, sanctification, and glorification are spiritual truths the Christian faith is built on. The church must represent Jesus Christ in word, in deed, and in power. I Peter 3:15 (NRSV) reads, "but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you." The church community in Hebrews did not do this, although they had been taught about Christ. A bold desire is necessary for the church to go into the world and declare the Gospel of Christ. This desire is equally important to acknowledge and understand the deeper revelations of the word of God. Spiritual immaturity can lead to personal and global stagnation, and the church needs to be vigilant in the pursuit of maturity for all believers. It is the writer's hope that the class developed for the congregation at Triumphant in Christ International Ministries will promote spiritual maturity in the membership.

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[22] Phillips, 182.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

Church renewal and church growth are prevalent concerns in our ever changing world. As societal norms change, the needs of people change and the religious community wants to accommodate those changes. Individualism, secularism, intellectualism and other beliefs have caused some people to reject God and church worship. Today, spirituality does not work for them. The ills of the world loom large but there is hope in Jesus Christ and the church that represents Him.

Throughout church history, complacency and spiritual dissatisfaction resulted in revivals. Triumphant in Christ International Ministries seemed to be in a state of complacency after the death of the founding pastor and did not pursue the vision to minister to the community. Historically, revivals, sometimes called awakenings, brought about positive changes in people, communities, and nations. The Historical Foundation for this project will focus on the First Great Awakening in America prior to the American Revolution and the events that led up to it. The principles used in the Great Awakening can be effectively applied to the church today. However, what some deemed as progress and necessary changes was seen by others as being controversial and regressive.

The Great Awakening was a series of revivals that took place in the American colonies as early as the 1720s. The Great Awakening was a time of spiritual revival,

political upheaval, and renewal in the church that began in Europe and spread across the continent. "Revivalism did not originate in America. As early as the 1620s, Scottish Presbyterians had religious gatherings lasting several days, beginning with repentance, confession, partaking of the sacrament, and thanksgivings. Presbyterians of Scotland and Ireland who migrated to the Middle Colonies brought with them a tradition of protracted emotional awakenings."[1] Jim Wallis stated "there have been other periods in history when faith tangibly changed things. Often called 'Great Awakenings,' they are times when the 'revival' of faith alters societies. The historians say that spiritual activity isn't called revival until it changes something, not just in people's inner lives but in society."[2] Wallis identified four Great Awakenings in American History. They are:

- The First Great Awakening took place in the 1730s and 1740s. Many credit this uprising of faith with helping to spark American independence and a new nation.
- The Second Great Awakening occurred between 1800 and the 1830s. Led by revivalists such as Charles Finney and Jonathan Blanchard, it embraced the clear call for the abolition of slavery that preceded the Civil War. This awakening also led to the origins of Christian feminism, in leaders such as Lucy Stone and Angelina and Sara Grimke.
- The Third Great Awakening, in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth, helped usher in the progressive era, the social gospel movement, and the New Deal. This era, with its special focus on poverty, led to social reforms such as child labor law improvements, the settlement house movement, the career of social work, and youth organizations such as the YMCA.
- Wallis regards the black church's leadership of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and the 1960s as another 'great awakening' of faith that changed politics. Without the participants' deep grounding in the black church, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the movement would not have succeeded.[3]

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[1] Howard Clark Kee, Emily Alb, Carter Lindberg, J. William Frost, and Dana L. Robert, *Christianity: A Social and Cultural History, 2nd ed.* (Upper Saddle,NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1998), 412.

[2] Jim Wallis, *The Great American Awakening: Revival Faith and Politics in a Post-Religious Right America* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2008), 2-3.

[3] Ibid.

Revivalism, Revivals and Awakenings

"Revivalism is the movement that promotes periodic spiritual intensity in church life, during which the unconverted come to Christ and the converted are shaken out of their spiritual lethargy. . . ., revivalism was one of the chief characteristics of American Protestantism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. . . "[4] "In America, awakenings have so often taken the form of revivalism, that revivals and awakenings have come to be seen as almost interchangeable with awakening, although there is a distinction between them."[5] Debates over the meaning of terms like revival, awakening and renewal has prompted much dialog . . . . Revivalism is both urban and rural, rational and emotional, cutting across all class lines. Renewal often refers to changes in church life that includes revivals but also includes other changes like liturgical and parish movements as well."[6]

> Revival and awakening are virtually synonymous terms, though awakening is usually used to refer to extensive revival movements. The general sources of revivalism are the Protestant emphasis on preaching, the Puritan emphasis on a noticeable conversion experience and the pietistic emphasis on warmhearted faith. To these may be added Solomon Stoddard's belief that the spirit works in "seasons of harvest." By the early eighteenth century, the notion of periodic awakenings in response to preaching and resulting in renewed spiritual life had emerged.[7]

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[4] W.G. Travis, *Dictionary of Christianity in America,* ed. Daniel Reid (Downers Grove, Il: Intervarsity Press, 1990), 1012.

[5] Howard C. Kee, *Christianity: A Social and Cultural History,* 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 1998) 411.

[6] W.G. Travis, 1012.

[7] Ibid.

Factors that led to the Great Awakening

Europeans immigrated to the New World for religious freedom and economic

gain. Robert Jewett pointed to religious and political pressures in Europe as the primary

reasons for this exodus to the New World.

> A substantial part of the settlement of the North American colonies was the direct
> consequence of the religious conflicts in Europe after the Protestant Reformation.
> The principle of enforcing religious conformity resulted in Calvinist, Lutheran,
> and Catholic states, some of which changed sides repeatedly as rulers altered their
> allegiance or battles were lost. This led to the Thirty Years' War of 1618-48, in
> which religious conflicts were entangled with competing royal claims and
> whereby half of the population of central Europe was slaughtered. Refugees from
> all over Europe immigrated to the American colonies, and the flow continued
> long after 1648, as religious conformity was enforced dissenters were forced to
> depart. In Britain, the conflicts between Anglicans, Catholics, and Puritans
> provoked the immigration of various dissenting groups to New England starting
> in 1620. In France, the Edict of Nantes was revoked in 1685, thus depriving the
> Protestant Huguenots of their rights. Some of them emigrated to New England,
> and a small colony settled in Charleston, South Carolina.
>   It is clear that not all immigrants came with religious motivations, but
> those who did so tended to be highly motivated, establishing their own churches
> and social institutions in the colonies.[8]

Colonist soon realized that life in North America was challenging and sometimes

dangerous. "Native Americans, provoked by unfair treatment by European colonist,

periodically attacked frontier settlements, sometimes with the encouragement of the hated

French colonists to the north."[9] "What the Americans saw as their sinfulness, and the

relentless threat of war that plagued New England (and to an extent, colonies further

south), seemed to demand dramatic intervention by God. Pastors told their churches that

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[8] Robert Jewett, *Mission and Menace: Four Centuries of American Religious Zeal* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008), 13-14.

[9] Thomas Kidd, *The Great Awakening: A Brief History With Documents* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin, 2008), 5.

their trouble with the Indians and Catholics would end only when the colonists

repented."[10]

Many of the traditional methods of worship and the restrictions the colonist faced

in Europe were being practiced in the churches in America.

> In New England and some other colonies, a particular denomination was established as the official church, with tax support and regularly appointed clergy who usually served many years in the same parish. With an average of three long sermons to prepare and deliver each week, these ministers were constantly at work in their studies, writing and preparing formal discourses that often lasted more than an hour at a time. People in a particular town would have heard only the one clergyman week after week, year after year, preaching his sermons in the church building.
>
> One result of this religious monopoly, which was also typical for Europe at the time, was boredom. Only extraordinary intellectuals could present fresh and interesting sermons week after week and year after year. And no matter how eloquent, one gets tired of hearing the same voice year after year. Since no other churches were allowed in New England and Virginia, there was little stimulation to debate controversial questions. On other colonies one remained with the church of one's tradition. One either accepted the local minister's views or opted out, which many did. It appears that for the majority of colonists, religion was simply not interesting.
>
> The situation was less regularized on the ever-expanding western frontier of the American colonies, as families cleared new land in the forest and established towns and farms. Many areas were completely lacking in religious leadership. A kind of religious vacuum was created, in which people lived without any formal contact with churches. These areas were similar to the new industrial cities in England: in both cases the traditional churches that had maintained the old social order were absent. Individuals were thrown back on their own resources. They were ready for a radically individualistic form of religion.[11]

The religious freedom the colonist expected in America eluded them. Instead they

experienced monotonous sermons, rote traditions, and insufficient spiritual support and

leadership. The atmosphere was charged and ready for an awakening.

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[10] Thomas Kidd, *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2010), 20-21.

[11] Robert Jewett , 48.

The Dawning of Change

In the 1720s pastors began calling for a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit and revival began in their churches and spread throughout the colonies. The messages of the Great Awakening were repentance, salvation (new birth), and the work of the Holy Spirit in every believer. The messages were delivered with fervor, excitement, and urgency. "The First Great Awakening of the mid-eighteenth century generated so much excitement and controversy. The Great Awakening was the greatest upheaval in the American colonies prior to the Revolutionary War of the 1770s and 1780s. Historians have usually interpreted the disagreements over the awakenings as a contest between 'Old Lights' (those who opposed the revivals) and 'New Lights' (those who supported them)." [12] Thomas Kidd proposes that:

> There were three camps during the First Great Awakening: moderate evangelicals, who supported the revivals but were deeply concerned about restraining their excesses; antirevivalist, who saw the revivals as all emotion and no substance and feared that they would break down the authority of the established ministers; and radical evangelicals, who saw the Great Awakening as a new era of spiritual power, accompanied by signs, wonders, and spiritual authority for the common man and woman.[13]

There were many revivalists during that period, but Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield are considered the most influential leaders of the time.

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[12] Kidd, *Great Awakening*, 2.

[13] Ibid.

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

Jonathan Edwards graduated from Yale University in 1720 at the age of

seventeen. He went on to pastor the Congregationalist church in Northampton,

Massachusetts. Throughout his life he craved knowledge and learning, particularly in the

fields of science and philosophy yet he vigorously upheld a Calvinistic philosophy which

emphasized "the sovereignty of God and predestination of all persons either to salvation

or to damnation." (p.52) He supported the Calvinist philosophies and at the same time

rejoiced and celebrated the various paths humans followed to become aware of the love

of God.[14]

The revival credited for starting the First Great Awakening began with a revival

in Jonathan Edwards' Northampton church in 1734 when some youth who were

disgruntled about the death of their friends attended Edwards' church. Edwards expressed

concern about the youths' salvation and he encouraged them to seek God. They did and

experienced a changed life. As a result, the fire of revival swept through the

community.[15]

Known as a great theologian, Jonathan Edwards made significant contributions to

the American Protestant experience. According to Amanda Porterfield:

> At one level, he altered Calvinism theology by recasting it in an eighteenth- idiom
> characterized by fascination with sensations of emotional feeling. . . .Perhaps
> most important, Edwards contributed to the evidentiary focus of Protestant
> experience and to the inclusion of supernatural activity as a crucial part of the
> empirical signage of Christian life. He resisted the tendency to incorporate grace
> within nature and did not want to confuse all of the emotional intensity associated
> with the revivals with the saving grace; reorientation of the Christian's will
> toward complete love of God might or might not be accompanied by weeping,

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[14] Jewett, 52.

[15] Kidd, *Great Awakening*, 6.

trembling, falling, or shouting. Such manifestations might even be caused by Satan. Nevertheless, he believed that the revivals of the early 1740s were part of a Great Awakening of the Holy Spirit.[16]

Edwards' greatest contribution to the American Protestant experience was his theologically sound and compassionate defense of the Great Awakening.

George Whitefield (1714-1770)

George Whitefield was the most influential evangelist during the Great Awakening. He was a converted stage actor who was heavily influenced and inspired by John and Charles Wesley. Like John and Charles Wesley, Whitefield championed the downtrodden, disenfranchised, and those forgotten by society. He is credited with creating the concept of outdoor revivals. Church buildings were as restrictive and confining a "denominational traditions" (p. 9), and Whitefield soon found his place in the open spaces of the outdoors where he could preach freely to a great number of people.[17]

Whitefield toured the American colonies four times and preached to large crowds in all of the colonies. "In Philadelphia, 20,000 heard him on one occasion, and Boston, with a population of around that number, had 10,000 at Whitefield's farewell sermon. In rural and urban settings, Whitefield brought more people together in one place than had ever before happened in the colonies."[18] "His theology was more Calvinistic than the Arminian theology of Wesley, with the results that he did not remain in the Methodist

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[16] Amanda Porterfield, *The Protestant Experience in America*. The American Religious Experience Series, ed. Philip Goff (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 55.

[17] Kidd, *Great Awakening*, 9.

[18] Kee, *Christianity: A Social and Cultural History*, 414.

movement. But he and Wesley continued to share an emphasis on personal faith and the power of grace."[19]

"Whitefield's success as an itinerant preacher in America involved a genius for self-promotion, a booming, mellifluous voice that drew large crowds and enabled him to preach outdoors, and theatrical skills developed as an aspiring actor in London before his conversion."[20] "Whitefield preached extemporaneously, and his message was clear: One had to be reborn in a conversion experience."[21] "Whitefield preached the consolations of God, the privileges of His Children, and the outpouring of the Spirit on believers. Instead of continual distress over sin, people experienced a spiritual renewal as Whitefield preached a healing, tender, positive gospel."[22]

Whitefield's itinerary and revival services were described in colonial newspapers, creating the first media event in America.[23] Benjamin Franklin published his sermons and journals.[24] Jewett believed that Whitefield's spontaneous preaching and outdoor meetings set the precedence for Protestant evangelicalism. Protestant evangelicalism became known for its uncompromising belief in personal conversion, challenging traditional church authority, and promoting radical revivalist. Whitefield and other revivalist

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[19] Jewett, *Mission and Menace*, 55.

[20] Porterfield, *Protestant Experience in America*, 51.

[21] Kee, *Christianity: A Social and Cultural History*, 414.

[22] Wesley L. Duewel, *Revival Fire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 61.

[23] Kee, 414.

[24] Duewel, 59.

contended that conversion was not received from humankind or from association with a church, but was from God. [25]

The Contributions of the Great Awakening

The Great Awakening changed the established order of the church. "The Great Awakening of the mid-eighteenth century fundamentally challenged the concept of state-supported churches and ministers . . . Some radicals came to believe that essential to Christian liberty was the freedom to preach openly in any parish and to be able to financially support a church and pastor of one's choice."[26] "Earlier in the colonial era, pastors often ruled their churches without question, and only white males with college degrees could become pastors. However, during the Great Awakening, many came to believe that the most important credential for authoritative religious speaking was the indwelling of the Holy Spirit."[27]

The disenfranchised were given a voice during the Great Awakening and they were listened to. Thomas Kidd stated:

The Great Awakening introduced common people to an exhilarating new world of spiritual possibilities. Never before had so many people had a chance to speak for themselves. Laypeople with no religious training often "exhorted" in the revival meetings, rousing their listeners to accept the new birth in Jesus. Critics complained that evangelicals were too "noisy," because in their most frenzied assemblies everyone had an opportunity to testify. Women, children, African Americans, Native Americans, and the poor—all were suddenly free to speak out

[25] Jewett, 55-56.

[26] Kidd, *God of Liberty*, 45.

[27] Kidd, *Great Awakening*, 12.

about their apprehension of the Lord's grace. Educated white men listened to these usually silent or silenced folks and concluded that they were filled with the Spirit. The most radical of the evangelical movements ordained uneducated men, including African Americans and Native Americans, into the ministry. Even women found leadership roles in certain evangelical churches as 'deaconesses' or 'eldresses.' A new era of spiritual democracy had begun.[28]

Church membership increased in the Presbyterian and Congregationalist churches, and especially in the Baptist church. The Baptist did more evangelizing in the south with positive results. "The Awakening brought two changes in worship: It made respectable the preaching of sermons extemporaneously and brought a new hymnology, created by English Evangelicals Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley. . . . New Englanders hired tutors to teach four-part harmony, and a few congregations followed the Moravians' lead and installed organs."[29]

Schools of higher education were established during the Great Awakening. Howard Kee stated, "The Awakening stimulated denominational-consciousness and the creation of new institutions to supply ministers. For the Presbyterians, there was the college later named Princeton; the Baptists in Rhode Island created Brown University; and Rutgers evolved from the Dutch Reformed's Queen's College."[30]

Historians have debated the issue of the Great Awakening precipitating the American Revolution, and the author believes it played a major role in preparing the people's hearts and minds for the Revolution. According to Jewett:

The religious component in American nationalism was enhanced by the Great Awakening because it provided the first genuinely national feelings on the part of colonists. The interpretation of the Great Awakening in millennial terms created a

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[28] Kidd, *God and Liberty*, 22.

[29] Kee, 417.

[30] Kee, 416.

new sense of nationalism that encompassed all of the colonies. Whereas before only New England had seen itself as God's New Israel, now the rest of the colonies began to feel that they constituted the millennial nation. When combined with the struggle against an established Anglican Church, this set the stage for the American Revolution. If paying church taxes to a church one did not like should be resisted as a violation of conscience, it was a small step to resist any other tax that was imposed without the consent of the colonists.[31]

Marilyn Westerkamp stated, "Rather than causing the Revolution, the Great Awakening may have resulted from the same societal changes that resulted in the Revolution. In other words, the challenges of the eighteenth century first produced widespread religious revivalism and then political revolution.[32]

Controversies

The Great Awakening caused division in the church and numerous church splits. "There were ninety-eight schisms in Congregational Churches in New England."[33] Westerkamp identified three issues as the points around which the debate regarding schism(s) revolved.

> First was the problem of ministerial qualifications . . . . On one side the Old Lights favored a special, academic examination for any candidate lacking a university baccalaureate, including graduates of Tennent's seminary. On the other were the New Lights, . . . demanding that evidence of experimental piety be a criterion for ordination.
> A second issue was the itineracy of the Log College men and their intrusions into unwelcoming presbyteries and pastorates. Although the New Light preachers were supported and regularly invited by residents in a particular region,

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[31] Jewett, 65.

[32] Marilyn L. Westerkamp, *Triumph of the Laity: Scots-Irish Piety and the Great Awakening 1625-1760* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1988), 4.

[33] Kee, 415.

they were perceived by Old Lights as violent, hostile intruders coming to steal and alienate congregations from their rightful pastors.

The third issue, . . . was the revivalism itself. Clerical opinion on the quality of the revival did differ . . . . Many Moderates were obviously confused and open to both positions, collecting information and opinions, . . . until they felt able to render a fair evaluation. With all three issues the religiosity of reason confronted the spirituality of emotion, and party lines were drawn.[34]

There were debates and controversies about the relevance and authenticity of the Great Awakening and some thought the Awakening was not of God because of the emotionalism. "Edwards maintained that the emotions displayed at the revival meetings did not determine one way or the other whether the awakenings were legitimate. Instead, he focused on the fruit the excitement produced and believed that if the short-term fervor resulted in more love, generosity, and holiness in the people affected, the revivals were of God."[35] Also, some theologians questioned the genuineness of the conversion experience because some of the people resumed their old ways soon after.

Conclusion

The Great Awakening was a spirited movement that impacted a large number of Christians and non-Christians. Ministers preached the Holy Spirit and salvation with zeal and conviction to whoever listened. They went to the people. This is significant because some people will not come to a church, especially those who seem to need the message of salvation the most. During the Great Awakening ministers preached in churches, fields, coal mines, in the city, in the country, wherever people would gather to hear from God.

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[34] Westerkamp, 192.

[35] Kidd, *Great Awakening*, 16.

Revival brings about positive change in people and in their world. The transformation of revival is contagious and people are drawn to this positive life changing experience. Neighborhoods, cities, and nations can be impacted when people are empowered by the truth, and the truth implied here is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Great Awakening was a proactive movement initiated by one person at a time that changed a religious system and a nation. Triumphant in Christ International Ministries became complacent after the death of the founding pastor and complacency breeds mediocrity. The ministry did not actively pursue the vision, "Reaching out to Impact, Equip and Demonstrate the Power of God through Excellence." The congregation came together to examine the influence of the changes we have experienced and to determine how to proceed. Preaching and teaching God's word under the power of the Holy Spirit, and demonstrating His love and compassion transformed the church during the Great Awakening and can do the same for a neighborhood church.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Because of Adam and Eve's disobedience, humankind fell into a state of sin. God made Adam and Eve and all humankind in His own image and likeness, placed them in the Garden of Eden and gave them dominion and provision, and they disobeyed Him (Gen 1:26-28). The result of their disobedience was immediate and God's creation tried to hide from Him; they were fearful and ashamed and blamed others for their behavior. God pronounced the consequences for their disregard of His rule and they were put out of the Garden of Eden. God had a redemptive plan. Humankind was in need of a savior, and God became that savior through Jesus Christ.

The body of Christ has the privilege and responsibility of sharing God's redemptive plan: salvation by faith in His Son Jesus Christ. Family Systems Theory proposes that a change in one person can bring about change in a family or other systems. Romans 5:18-19 says, "Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. For just as by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many were made righteous." Jesus' act of obedience was greater than Adam's fall and Jesus brought salvation to the world. The context (TICIM) can take the message of salvation to the neighborhood and bring about a change in the people and the environment.

The Doctrine of Salvation

God's love for humankind is complete and everlasting. He loved humans before the foundation of the world[1], and . . . "God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us."[2] According to McGrath, "the doctrine of salvation deals with the restoration of the created order, and above all humanity, to its proper relationship to God."[3] "The Christian doctrine of salvation focuses on Jesus Christ, as the redeemer and savior of the world."[4] The doctrine of salvation is also called "soteriology." This project will emphasize the Christian doctrine of salvation as a foundation for acknowledging change and church inclusion. Salvation is an all-encompassing theological concept, with wide-range secular usage. McGrath proposes that "salvation is grounded in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ; and the Christian understanding of salvation have both past, present, and future elements."[5]

"Salvation is one of the central messages of the Bible . . . .The concept of salvation is represented by various terms and situations in both Testaments. Among several Hebrew words which mean 'deliver' or 'save,' the Hebrew verb yasha` and derivatives are most frequently translated by English versions as 'save' or 'salvation'."[6]

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[1] *New Revised Standard Version*, Eph. 1:4.

[2] Romans 5:8 All Biblical references are in *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV) unless otherwise noted.

[3] Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 5th ed. (Kings College, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 315.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid, 317, 319.

[6] Robert D. Spender, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* ed. Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1884.

According to The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary, "the primary word for salvation in the Hebrew Bible (yosha`) has a root meaning of 'broadening' or 'enlarging' and can connote the creation of space in the community for life and conduct. . . . God rescues and delivers people out of a situation of opposition and peril, placing them into a situation of recovered prosperity and well-being."[7] The exodus of the Nation of Israel (Ex 14:13) is a perfect example of God's salvation. "The Old Testament deals with salvation in a promissory and provisional way."[8]

"In classical Greek the verb sozo 'to save' and noun soteria 'salvation' are used for the concept of 'rescue,' 'deliverance' or 'salvation,' and even 'well-being' or 'health.'"[9] "In the Gospels salvation is clearly connected with the Old Testament concept of salvation and applied to the coming of Christ in Zechariah's prophecy (Lk 1:69, 71; cf. Ps 106:10; 132:17) and Simeon's hymn of praise (Lk 2:30)."[10] "The salvation Jesus brought is primarily personal and spiritual. It is instructive that the Greek name for Jesus, Iesous, is a transliteration of the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, which means, "Yahweh is salvation."[11]

> How does one receive salvation? Basically, a person has to believe, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that Jesus is the Son of God and in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the eighteenth century Lutheran theologians, Franz

[7] Mark Allan Powell, ed., *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 908, accessed December 5, 2014, Logos Bible Software.

[8] Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: Foundations of Evangelical Theology*, ed. John Feinberg (Wheaton, Il: Crossway Books, 1997), 25.

[9] Spender, 1884.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Demarest, 26, 27.

Buddeus and Jacob Carpov, coined a phrase "ordo salutis," the order of salvation.[12]

". . . The notion of an ordering of the doctrines of salvation has come under criticism by Karl Barth . . . [and other theologians] because it is difficult to schematize temporally the boundless riches of God's saving grace exercised from eternity past to eternity future. It is possible that ordo as a rigid structure may direct our focus away from Christ to an unhealthy psychologizing of salvation (subjectivism)."[13]

Granting the legitimacy of the order of salvation, Demarest believes certain qualifications regarding such a formulation must be made. They are:

The Order of Salvation
1. The order of salvation includes things that God does (election, calling, justification, regeneration, ect.) as well as things that humans do (belief, repentance, trust, perseverance).
2. The ordo must be viewed as logical as well as a chronological relation. Conversion, regeneration, union with Christ, and justification occur simultaneously in the moment of decision for Christ, and not successively.
3. Certain aspects of the scheme of salvation are not discrete events but realities that pervade the entire Christian life: e.g., belief, repentance, trust, sanctification, divine preservation, and human perseverance.
4. As Berkouwer and Hoekema point out, aspects of the salvation experience are interactive. Thus faith is active in justification, in sanctification, and in perseverance. Moreover, union with Christ (abiding in him) is essential for sanctification and perseverance. Hence the order of salvation must not be viewed simplistically as a linear sequence of chronological occurrences.
5. Every aspect of salvation profoundly focuses on Christ. Thus Christ apportions grace (Eph 4:7). Moreover, saints are elected in Christ (Eph 1:4); they are called to Christ (1 Cor 1:9); they believe in the truth about Christ (Rom 19:9; 1 John 5:1,5); they turn to Christ in repentance (1 Peter 2:25); they are justified by the blood of Christ (Heb 13:12); regeneration takes place in Christ (2 Cor 5:17; Tit 3:5-6); they are united with Christ (Gal 2:20); they are transformed into the image of Christ (2 Cor 3:18); they are kept and preserved by Christ 9!John 5:18); and they will receive the glory of Christ (2 Thess 2:14).

Source: Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 43.

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[12] Demarest, 36.

[13] Demarest, 42.

The order of salvation demonstrates the transformation that occurs with salvation and

God's role as well as the role of humankind. Christ is prominent in every phase of

salvation.

> Given these significant observations and qualifications, we suggest the following
> ordering of the various aspects of the salvation wrought by Christ on the cross
> (Atonement).
>
> The Plan and Provision of Salvation from beginning to end is rooted in God's
> grace and originates with God's sovereign elective decision for life made in
> eternity past.
> The Application of Salvation in its subjective aspects commences with the Spirit's
> effectual calling and continues in the movements of conversion and regeneration.
> In its objective aspects the fruit of Christ's work applied to believers includes
> union with Christ, justification, and adoption into the family of God.
> The Progress of Salvation is manifested through the Holy Spirit's sanctification or
> purification of believers' lives and the divine preservation that enables human
> perseverance to the end.
> The Perfecting of Salvation will be realized in the glorification of true believers at
> Christ's second advent. In this consummation of the entire movement of
> salvation, Christians will be perfectly conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.[14]

The order of salvation that Demarest proposes is inclusive of most, if not all of the

aspects of salvation, and the author of this research agrees that salvation is not an isolated

event but is intertwined with other theological doctrines. Salvation is the threshold of

Christian life that nourishes and propels people through life as they become mature

Christians, thereby becoming able witnesses of Jesus.

The doctrine of salvation has been challenged and debated by non-Christians and

Christians for centuries, and not all of Christendom understands salvation as it has been

presented in this paper. McGrath stated, "The idea of 'salvation' is exceptionally

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[14] Demarest, 43-44.

complex."[15] Interpretations of salvation are varied depending on historical and cultural periods and events. Theologians develop theories and models of salvation to address the issues at hand when they believe the Christian doctrine of salvation is not appropriate. The following is a summary of various interpretations of salvation presented by Demarest in *The Cross and Salvation*.

- Catholicism insist that the supernatural benefits of Christ's sacrifice are conveyed physically through the churches sacraments. The sacrament of baptism is said to remit original sin, impart sanctifying grace, and unite the soul to Christ. Salvation is by grace and work. The Second Vatican redefined salvation existentially and broadened its scope to include all non-Christians religionists and even atheists. Contemporary Catholicism is quite universalistic in its outlook.
- Theological liberalism . . . denies supernaturalism, miracles, biblical authority, and other classical doctrines of the faith. Positing an optimistic, evolutionary view of persons and history, liberals view salvation as the process of perfecting an infantile, but inherently noble, race rather than redeeming a fallen, and inherently sinful, one. They define salvation as the transformation of human society by education, social change, and political action motivated by ideals and ethics of Jesus of Nazareth.
- Christian existentialism's focus is anthropocentric (treating humans as preeminent) rather than theocentric (God as main focus). According to Christian existentialism, persons are estranged from their authentic mode of being and hence suffer alienation, anxiety, and despair. Faith that saves, Christian existentialists assert, is the act of believing with a deep inner passion and radical engagement. Faith commits to the ultimate paradox that Jesus Christ bridged the chasm between the infinite God and sinners. It makes a courageous commitment, . . .to the One who demands that a choice be made between living according to God's demands or one's own pleasure.
- Liberation theology . . . generally assumes that all persons are in Christ, but that they have become radically dehumanized by social, economic, and political oppression, which in turn have spawned poverty, illiteracy, violence, and untold human suffering. Liberationist view salvation collectively as the overthrow of unjust and corrupting social structures by revolution and violence, if necessary. They extol the Exodus from Egypt as the primary biblical paradigm of God's liberating action from structural oppression. It commonly subscribes to the doctrine of universalism, which means that God is saving all people everywhere.
- Barthian neo-orthodoxy Barth held that Christ objectively wrought salvation for all people by his victory on the cross (the "classic" theory of Atonement).

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[15] McGrath, 337.

He argued that Christ at his coming united to himself humanum—the entire race. Thus in Christ's death on the cross the world's sin was judged and in his resurrection the race was vindicated. The justification and sanctification (or conversion) of every person through Christ's death and victorious resurrection represent the outworking of the covenant God instituted in eternity past to bring humankind to fellowship with himself. Salvation thus is something God decisively accomplished at Calvary; people have little to contribute to its achievement. Barth envisaged faith, repentance, and obedience as manifestations of a finished salvation rather than as a means by which that salvation is personally realized. Formally the unrepentant are justified and sanctified, but existentially they need to awake from their spiritual slumber and experience the salvation Christ accomplished as their Representative.

- Evangelical Arminians claim that in love God sent Christ into the world for the purpose of saving humankind from the ruin of sin (universal Atonement) and that God desires the salvation of all (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9). They insist that universal, prevenient grace flowing from Christ's cross ("preparing grace") transforms sinners in the first moment of moral light, thereby nullifying the debilitating effects of depravity, restoring moral free agency, and convicting of sin. Thus blessed by prevenient grace and when confronted with the general call to salvation, the unsaved cooperate with God, repent of sins, and trust Christ as savior. Arminians emphasize that the grace and calling of God are resistible, hence sinners may choose to reject Christ and continue in their sins. Arminians understand the doctrine of election conditionally as God's decision to save those he foresaw would respond to grace and accept Christ. . . . Some affirm that God wills that sanctification be perfected in this life by a second work of grace that is said to eradicate the sinful nature and its desires, fill the heart with perfect love for God, and enable Christians to live without willful sin. In addition, many Arminians deny the doctrine of perseverance of the saints. They insist that by deliberate sin Christians can renounce their prior faith commitment and thereby fall from the state of grace, forfeit eternal salvation, and be doomed to perdition.

- Reformed Evangelicals believe Scripture to teach that by willful spiritual defection the highest of God's creatures are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1). Holistically depraved sinners have neither the inclination nor the ability to seek God and spiritual life. Hence the initiative in salvation must reside with the sovereign God. God's grace plans, precedes, undergirds, and executes the process of salvation from beginning to end. Reformed Evangelicals thus extol the confession of Jonah after experiencing God's wisdom and goodness: "Salvation comes from the Lord" (Jon 2:9).[16]

There are other interpretations of the doctrine of salvation, but those presented illustrate the differences in how this doctrine is perceived and how other doctrines

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[16] Demarest, 31-35.

emanate from it. In *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, McGrath discussed

"contextualization and receptor-orientation of the Christian proclamation in explaining

the models of salvation in Christ. The Christian gospel is recognized to address specific

situations and to contextualize the notion of salvation in those situations. To those who

are oppressed, whether spiritually or politically, the gospel message is that of

liberation."[17] The author believes the Gospel of Jesus Christ can be effectively applied to

any area of one's life, but when interpretations are filtered through the minds of men and

women without the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, error occurs and people are misled.

Historically the doctrine of salvation has been tried and judged, and thankfully the

doctrine continues to be relevant and sound today. The early church leaders fought long,

hard, passionate battles for Christianity and the integrity of the biblical scriptures. During

the fourth century, the Arian controversy consumed the church and the political arena,

and as a result, the Nicene Creed was developed and accepted.

Arius, a priest in the Egyptian city of Alexandria,[18] "taught that the one who had

come to us in Jesus Christ was not truly God, but a lesser being, a creature. His chief

opponent was Athanasius. He was a bishop of Alexandria, and the presence of God in

history was the central element in his faith. For Athanasius the Arian controversy was not

a matter of theological subtleties . . . . In it, the very core of the Christian message was at

stake."[19] Stephen Nichols stated "Arius denied Christ's eternality, instead viewing Christ

as created or made by God as the first being. Christ then created or made everything else.

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[17] McGrath, 337-338.

[18] McGrath, 274.

[19] Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 1:201.

This led Arius to view Christ as more than human, but not identical in essence or being to God. Arius rejected the Trinity . . . and the deity of God. Arius further held his teachings to be true to Scripture."[20] "Arius did not believe in the incarnation of God because it was inconsistent with the changelessness and transcendence of God. . . . He believed that many were being alienated from Christianity on account of its increasing emphasis upon an idea-the incarnation-which he believed many educated Greeks were unable to accept."[21]

"Athanasius argues that it is only God who saves. God, and God alone, can break the power of sin, and bring humanity to eternal life. He believed Jesus is God incarnate, and no creature can redeem another creature."[22]

Constantine called for the gathering of bishops from all parts of the empire to come to Nicaea to resolve the Arian controversy and other church issues in 325. Athanasius was present as secretary for Alexander, but he could not sit in the council. The Nicene Creed was written and approved as a result.[23]

> In addition to clearly and forcefully articulating the deity of Christ, the Nicene Creed also laid great stress on the humanity of Christ. The creed holds that Christ was begotten, not made as Arius held. Christ came down from heaven, was incarnate, was virgin-born. He lived, he suffered, he died on a cross—the ultimate testimony to his humanity. Then he rose again and ascended into heaven, the God-man who will return someday to judge the world.[24]

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[20] Stephen J. Nichols, *For Us and for Our Salvation: The Doctrine of Christ in the Early church* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2007), 59.

[21] McGrath, 276.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Gonzalez, 186-189.

[24] Nichols, 62.

The key word in the creed, homoousios (of the same substance), was intended to convey that the Son was just as divine as the Father. The Arians believed the Son was of similar substance (homoiousios).[25]

Due to political changes, Arianism became prominent and Athanasius was exiled several times and his reputation was attacked. The Second Ecumenical Council met and ratified the Nicene Creed in 381. Athanasius died in 373.[26] Nichols asked the question, "Why did Athanasius wrangle for decades over one word, one letter, i? The reason comes in a phrase that is attributed to Athanasius, 'for us and for our salvation.' He wrangled with the best minds of the day and endured persecution at the hands of the most powerful politicians of the day, all for the sake of the gospel."[27]

Islam, Jehovah Witness, and other religions currently deny the deity of Jesus Christ, and humankind will always question God, His purpose, their purpose. It is an endless scenario. In the beginning, God made male and female in His own image and likeness, gave them dominion and provision, but when the serpent asked "Did God say?" they doubted God. They wanted to know good and evil and if they would die. People still have questions about good and evil and what will happen when they die. But God in His great mercy, love, and grace, manifested Himself through His Son Jesus Christ to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8) and to give us abundant life (John 10:10) and everlasting life with Him (John 3: 16).

The church that is my context, Triumphant in Christ International Ministries, has prison, nursing home, youth, and men and women ministries, but ministry has not been

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[25] Gonzalez, 190.

[26] Gonzalez, 203-207.

[27] Nichols, 66.

directed towards the neighborhood. Evangelism is a major component in the church's vision and initially it was the primary focus of the author's project. In light of changes in leadership, the congregation needed to come together to do some internal work before putting excessive time and work into evangelistic outreach. This was done through a Bible study on Family Systems Theory based on Murray Bowen's work. The members participated in the class and voiced a commitment to minister to the neighborhood.

The evangelism the author envisions is defined by G. Schweer as "the Spirit-led communication of the gospel of the kingdom in such a way or ways that the recipients have a valid opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and become responsible members of His church."[28] Mission can be defined as "a task on which God sends a person that He has called, particularly a mission to introduce another group of people to salvation in Christ."[29]

Salvation in Christ is wholeness in every aspect of life. It is comfort and assurance that God is with us regardless of the circumstances because when we accept Christ as savior His Spirit dwells within us. The Scripture declares:

> If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they

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[28] G. William Schweer, "Evangelism," ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 518.

[29] Bob Compton, "Mission(s)," ed. Chad et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1140.

to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? (Rom 10:9-15 NRSV)

Jesus commissioned his disciples to go into the world and proclaim the good news (Mark16:15). Jesus said the good news is for the poor, to proclaim release to the captive, recovery of sight to the blind, and the oppressed go free (Luke 4:18). When the good news is preached and taught to the saved as well as the unsaved, a change will take place, and newness of life will come. This new and living way that has been provided for us through salvation is a message to be shared and demonstrated to all mankind. Triumphant in Christ International Ministries can make a difference in their neighborhood and they are ready to do so.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The church is called the body of Christ and the household of faith. This provides

us with a clear comparison of the traditional family with the church family. Scriptures

refer to Christians as children and sons and daughters of God.

The context for this project, Triumphant in Christ International Ministries, is a

small family-oriented church. The Family Systems Theory has helped pastors and church

leaders understand the dynamics of relationships in their congregations and effectively

manage the needs of congregations. In one phase of the project, the congregation will

participate in a class on Family Systems Theory. One expected outcome of the class is for

the participants to determine how the changes in leadership over the past nine years has

impacted the ministry and growth of the church. The church membership is small and the

members may have become comfortable with each other and unknowingly excluded

others, including the surrounding neighborhood, from the church and the body of Christ.

The church is sometimes perceived as a family and many congregations endeavor

to function like a family. Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines family as:

> A group of individuals living under one roof and usually one head; a group of
> persons of persons of common ancestry; a group of people united by certain
> convictions or common affiliation; the unit in society traditionally consisting

of two parents rearing their own or adopted children, also any various social units differing from but regarded as equivalent to the traditional family (a single parent family).[1]

Bowen's Family Systems Theory is the primary Family Systems Theory referred to in this paper. "Bowen family system is a theory of human behavior that views the family as an emotional unit and uses systems thinking to describe the complex interactions in the unit."[2] "Bowen family systems theory does not tell humans how they should live but is an effort towards science that describes how humans predictably react in relationships. Just as medical science describes the behavior of cells that distort, systems theory describes the knowable patterns of humans in their relational spheres."[3]

Murray Bowen (1913-1990), a professor of psychiatry at Georgetown University, became dissatisfied with the results of traditional therapy on his schizophrenic patients. In the 1950s he began observing the patients' families and discovered that the parents experienced significant marital problems. "When the focus of the therapy was shifted from the person with psychotic symptoms to the relationship between husband and wife and when some progress was made on this point, the patient would improve, often dramatically, without any special attention."[4] "A change in one person's functioning is

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[1] *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* 10th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1993), 420-421.

[2] The Bowen Center, "Bowen Theory", accessed April 29, 2014 http://www.thebowencenter.org/pages/theory.html.

[3] The Family Systems Institute, "Bowen Theory and a Biblical World View," accessed June 4, 2014, http://www.familysystemstraining.com/system-in-ministry/Jennys-letters.

[4] Leander S. Harding, "The Atonement and Family Therapy," *Anglican Theologian Review*, 47 no. 1, 48, accessed April 18, 2014, Atlas EBSCOhost.

predictably followed by reciprocal changes in the functioning of others. Families differ somewhat in the degree of interdependence, but it is always present to some degree."[5]

"The emotional interdependence presumably evolved to promote the cohesiveness and cooperation families require to protect, shelter, and feed their members. Heightened tension can intensify these processes that promote unity and teamwork, and this can lead to problems."[6] The emotional bond of the family becomes stressed when anxiety increases, and sooner or later some family member(s) feels alone, unstable, or devastated. These are the people who take the burden trying to reduce or eliminate the stress in the family upon themselves. As a result, they are susceptible to problems such as drug addiction, depression or physical illness.[7]

The family systems theory is based on systems thinking. Edwin Friedman defines emotional system and systems thinking as:

> The term emotional system refers to any group of people who have developed interdependencies to the point where the resulting system through which they are connected (administratively, physically, or emotionally) has evolved its own principles of organization. The structure therefore tends to influence the functioning of the various members more than any of the components tends to influence the functioning of the system. A family emotional system includes the member's thoughts, feelings, emotions, fantasies, and associations, their past connections individually and together. It includes their physical makeup, genetic heritage, and current metabolic states. It involves their sibling positions and their parents' sibling positions. The essential characteristic of systems thinking is that the functioning of any part of the network is due to its position in the network rather than to its own nature. Nature may determine the range of possible functioning and response, but not what specifically it will express.[8]

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[5] The Bowen Center, "Bowen Theory", 1.

[6] Ibid.

[7] The Family Systems Institute, 1.

[8] Edwin H. Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*, ed. Margaret M. and Edward W. Beal (New York, NY: Seabury Books, 2007), 197.

Understanding how the emotional system works gives one the awareness of more effective options for resolving problems in the family, work, church and other social systems.

Bowen family systems theory has eight interconnecting concepts. They are: Triangles, Differentiation of Self, Nuclear Family Emotional System, Family Projection Process, Multigenerational Transmission, Emotional Cutoff, Sibling Position, and Societal Emotional Process. The following is a brief description of each:

Triangles

Triangle is a three-person relationship system. It is considered the building block or 'molecule' of larger emotional systems because a triangle is the smallest stable relationship system. A two-person system is unstable because it tolerates little tension before involving a third person. A triangle can contain much more tension without involving another person because the tension can shift around three relationships.

Spreading the tension can stabilize a system, but nothing gets resolved. People's action in a triangle reflect their efforts to ensure their emotional attachments to important others, their reactions to too much intensity in the attachments, and their taking sides in the conflict of others. Someone is always uncomfortable in a triangle and pushing for change.

Differentiation of Self

The ability to be in emotional contact with others yet still autonomous in one's own emotional functioning is the essence of the concept of differentiation. (Kerr and Bowen, 1988) The less developed a person's 'self,' the more impact others have on his functioning and the more he tries to control, actively or passively, the functioning of others. The basic building blocks of a 'self' are inborn, but an individual's family relationships during childhood and adolescence primarily determine how much 'self' he develops.

Nuclear Family Emotional System

The concept of the nuclear family emotional system describes four basis relationship patterns that govern where problems develop in a family. The

patterns operate in intact, single-parent, step-parent, and other nuclear family configurations. The four basic relationship patterns are:

Marital conflict- As family tension increases and the spouses get more anxious, each spouse externalizes his or her own anxiety into the marital relationship. Each focuses on what is wrong with the other, each tries to control the other, and each resists the other's effort at control.

Dysfunction in one spouse- One spouse pressures the other to think and act in certain ways and the other yields to the pressure. Both spouses accommodate to preserve harmony, but one does more of it. . . .If family tension rises further, the subordinate spouse may yield so much self-control that his or her anxiety increases significantly and this could lead to the development of a psychiatric, medical or social dysfunction.

Impairment of one or more children- The spouses focus their anxieties on one or more of their children. They worry excessively and usually have an idealized or negative view of the child. The more the parents focus on the child the more the child focuses on them. He is more reactive than his siblings to the attitudes, needs, and expectations of the parents. The child's anxiety can impair his school performance, social relationships, and even his health.

Emotional distance- This pattern is consistently associated with the others. People distance from each other to reduce the intensity of the relationship, but risk becoming too isolated.

Family Projection Process

The family projection process describes the primary way parents transmit their emotional problems to a child. The projection process follows three steps: (1) the parent focuses on a child out of fear that something is wrong with the child; (2) the parent interprets the child's behavior as confirming the fear; and (3) the parent treats the child as if something is really wrong with the child.

Multigenerational Transmission Process

The concept of the multigenerational transmission process describes how small differences in the level of differentiation between parents and their offspring lead over many generations to marked differences in differentiation among the members of a multigenerational family. The next step in the multigenerational transmission process is people predictably selecting mates with levels of differentiation of self that match their own.

Emotional Cutoff

The concept of emotional cutoff describes people managing their unresolved emotional issues with parents, siblings, and other family members by reducing or

totally cutting off emotional contact with them. Relationships may look 'better' if people cutoff to manage them, but the problems are dormant and not resolved. People reduce the tensions of family interactions by cutoff, but risk making their new relationships too important. People who are cutoff may try to stabilize their intimate relationships by creating substitute 'families' with social and work relationships.

Sibling Position

Bowen theory incorporates the research of psychologist Walter Toman as a foundation for its concept of sibling position. Bowen observed the impact of sibling position on development and behavior in his family research. However, he found Toman's work so thorough and consistent with his ideas that he incorporated it into his theory. The basic idea is that people who grow up in the same sibling position predictably have important common characteristics.

Societal Emotional Process

The concept of societal emotional process describes how the emotional system governs behavior on a societal level, promoting both progressive and regressive periods.[9]

The concepts of Bowen family systems are relevant to all groups of people in society, especially the church. The church is a conglomeration of families who are a part of the family of God. Every person has a unique personality and family history that comes with them to the church, and new relationships are formed with others within the congregation and denomination. The ultimate relationship to be nurtured is the relationship with God, but behaviors associated with the relationships of congregants can stymie the relationship with God and the functioning of the church. "Each piece of a

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[9]The Bowen Center, Triangles 1-3; Differentiation 1-4; Nuclear Family 1-4; Family Projection 1-5; Multigenerational Transmission 1-4; Emotional Cutoff 1-3; Sibling Position 1-3; Societal Emotional Process 1-2.

system is a part of a whole. The particular affects the whole, and vice versa. All life is connected in this way."[10]

Rabbi Edwin Friedman, a student of Bowen, was the first to develop and apply the family systems theory to pastoral functioning.[11] Others joined in developing the theory for ministry. Currently, Bowen Center for the Study of the Family and the Family Systems Institute (Systems in Ministry) are continuing the work.

The family systems theory has not been implemented at the author's church, but the dynamics of the concepts are obvious and the theory would serve the congregations well. Excerpts of case studies were presented to demonstrate how Bowen family systems theory (BFST) has worked in congregation.

James E. Lamkin was pastor of Northside Drive Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia when he wrote the article "Systems Theory and Congregational Leadership: Leaves from an Alchemist's Journal." He wrote about his emotional cut-off with his sister and with the help of pastoral counseling, they reconnected. Ronald Richardson stated, "Conflicts between two people will often resolve themselves if a third person, who is important to them emotionally, can maintain contact with them both and remain neutral about their conflict."[12] The triangle was Mr. Lamkin, his sister, and the pastor. Mr. Lamkin described the reconnection as the most significant breakthrough in his adult life, and the impact went beyond their family. The reconnection with his sister paralleled a

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[10] James. E. Lamkin, "Systems Theory and Congregational Leadership: Leaves from an Alchemist's Journal, *Review and Expositor* 102 (Summer 2005): 467, accessed June 5, 2014, Atlas EBSCOhost.

[11] Ronald W. Richardson, "Bowen Family Systems Theory and Congregational Life," *Review and Expositor* 102 (Summer 2005): 381, accessed April 18, 2014, Atlas EBSCOhost.

[12] Richardson, 383.

reconnection at the church he pastored. There was a freedom and joy in the church that resulted in church growth.[13]

Lamkin believes "the minister always lives in a triangle with God and God's people. Preaching can be a triangle. A equals the preacher, B equals the congregation and C equals God or the text or scripture passage to be preached."[14] From a family systems perspective, issues in a congregation can sometimes be addressed by the text or scripture passage. The pastor does not have to force the issue or feel like he or she has to "make something happen."[15]

"The nuclear family emotional system concept describes the patterns of emotional functioning in a one-generation family, or, from the point of view of the church, within a primary administrative unit. This concept includes a number of sub-concepts."[16] For example, if there is a problem on the Board, BFST "recognizes the interconnectedness of people in emotional systems . . . and every involved person is included as a part of the problem and of the potential solution."[17]

Differentiation of self is a major concept for pastors and leaders because it entails maintaining a sense of self while caring and providing for others. "Friedman understood and taught that, viewed through the lens of BFST, pastoral leadership is about changing

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[13] Lamkin, 464-465.

[14] Lamkin, 471.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Richardson, 384.

[17] Ibid., 385.

self and not about changing others."[18] It is important for pastors and leaders to do the

necessary family work to understand how their family relationships influence their

thoughts and behavior. This process can be difficult and a supportive, knowledgeable

person in the triangle can help, but the key is self-differentiation. "Differentiation helps

us to begin to clarify who is responsible for what and where the limits of our

responsibility lie. It helps us to begin to be clear that more loving and caring behavior

involves not doing for others what they can do for themselves."[19] Self-differentiation is

an ongoing process and it is a systems understanding of maturity.[20] Anxiety occurs when

there is disagreement and conflict. The more self-differentiated a person becomes they

become better at being non-anxious in an anxious environment. When the leader calmly

and effectively works through a situation, the congregation's response will be calm also.

Bowen Family Systems Theory has been effective in numerous genres of

organizations and institutions and in the authors' life personally and professionally. The

author believes self-differentiated is obtained and maintained by knowing who one is in

Christ. Craig Nessan stated, "The ultimate ground of non-anxious presence, theologically

considered, is the gospel. The Christian message of justification, that one is made right

with God by God's grace alone through faith in Christ, is the final basis for genuine non-

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[18] Lawrence E. Matthews, "Bowen Family Systems Theory: A Resource for Pastoral Theologians," *Review and Expositor* 102 (Summer 2005): 434, accessed March 17, 2104. Atlas EBSCOhost.

[19] Richardson, 393.

[20] Jenny Brown, "What is Bowen Theory? Who is Dr. Murray Bowen? in "Growing Yourself Up: How to bring your best to all of life's relationship," 3-5, accessed June 3, 2014 http://www.thefsi.com.au/us/bowentheory.

anxiousness."[21] When the author's church, Triumphant in Christ International Ministries, faced a financial crisis and when the assistant pastor left to start a church, the pastor did not become anxious and reactive. She focused on the theological truths and remained calm and the congregation followed her example.

The congregation at Triumphant in Christ International Ministries participated in a Bible study to learn the principles of BFST and integrate these principles with evangelism to foster a shift from being a closed family system to an open family system. Jeffrey Arnold stated, "The message of evangelism, called the 'Good News,' is that salvation has come through Jesus Christ."[22] Salvation was made available by God's love for humankind at the cost of death. We have been grafted into God's family by faith in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and Jesus commissioned us to tell the world.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:5, "He [God] destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will." The Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary (Eleventh Edition) defines adoption as "to take by choice into a relationship especially to take voluntarily (a child of other parents) as one's own child."[23] The Faithlife Study Bible stated adoption refers to the bestowing of familial rights and privileges on a person born outside the family.[24] God chose to adopt the nations and to make them his own. By faith in Jesus Christ one becomes a part of the household of faith, the church, the body of Christ. Romans 8:15-17 says we have received a spirit of

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[21] Craig L. Nessan, "Surviving Congregational Leadership: A Theology of Family Systems," *World & World* 20, No. 4 (Fall 2000): 390-399, accessed April 29, 2014, Atlas EBSCOhost.

[22] Jeffrey Arnold, *The Big Book on Small Groups* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 204.

[23] Merriam-Webster, Inc. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed.

[24] John D. Barry and Michael M. Heiser, *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2012), accessed February 11, 2015, Logos Bible Software.

adoption and are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. This is good news and Triumphant in Christ International Ministries will share the message of Jesus Christ in the community and invite them to be in God's family and a part of our congregational family.

The majority of the people in the congregation remember what life was like before accepting Christ as Savior and Lord. The second chapter of Ephesians compares life before and after Christ. The eleventh and twelfth verses remind the Gentiles that they were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." Jesus brought unity and peace between the Jews and the Gentiles through the cross and they have access to the Father by one Spirit. Those who are not in the body of Christ can come into a relationship with God and with the neighborhood church through Jesus Christ.

The concept of triangles used in the Bowen Family Systems Theory will be emphasized in the class because the members of the congregation will be part of a triangle: A the person being witnessed to, B the church member, and C the Triune God. Nessan stated, "God in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit works through triangles to accomplish salvific purposes. Wherever there is a broken relationship, God sends Christ embodied in Word and vitalized by the Spirit to form a redemptive triad."[25] The church is the carrier of God's word, and we are privileged to work in the ultimate triangle, God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Family systems theory views a congregation as a whole rather than individual parts of a whole. Therefore, a change in a congregation impacts the whole congregation.

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[25] Nessan, 396.

By studying the principles of BFST, the congregants at TICIM will have a means to examine the effects of the changes that have occurred in the church in the past nine years. We are instructed in Scripture to examine ourselves (I Corinthians 12:28) and to test our own work (Galatians 6:4), and TICIM needs to identify how the changes affected the ministry. The congregation can be effective in evangelism when there is clarity of purpose and goals. The congregation will think and talk about changes and growth. It is easy to become complacent and comfortable in a small family atmosphere, but the will of God is first and foremost. The author believes Triumphant in Christ International Ministries will be better equipped to fulfill the vision God entrusted them with as a result of this project.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Methodology

The hypothesis for this project was that the congregation at Triumphant in Christ International Ministries would become more inclusive and minister to the needs of the neighborhood when the changes that occurred in leadership were addressed. The changes that occurred in the past nine years are: the founding pastor died, his wife was elected pastor, and the assistant pastor and his immediate family left to plant a church. The congregation needed an internal assessment to determine if the changes in leadership had altered the perception of who we are as a church and the way we function.

The research design for this project was qualitative research. A case study and action research method were implemented. According to John Creswell, "Writers agree that one undertakes qualitative research in a natural setting where the researcher is an instrument of data collection who gathers words or pictures, analyzes them inductively, focuses on the meaning of participants, and describes a process that is expressive and persuasive in language."[1] The researcher is a member of the context and serves as an Associate Minister and Trustee on the official Board at the church. I had the opportunity to observe and communicate with the members frequently. The action research

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[1] John W. Creswell, *Quality Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication, 1998), 14.

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framework adequately describes the goals of this project. "Action research is intended to uncover or produce information and knowledge that will be directly useful to a group of people . . . . Second, it is meant to enlighten and empower the average person in the group, motivating them to take up and use the information gathered in research (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Reason, 1994)."[1]

All of the adult members of the church were asked to participate in a one hour class on Bowen Family Systems Theory taught as a Bible study on Sunday morning from February 8, 2015 to March 29, 2015. The Bible study was called the "Kingdom Builders Class" because it was anticipated that the information received and shared in the class would give momentum to evangelism and inclusion. Shortly after the class concluded, the congregation went to a housing development in the neighborhood to share the Gospel with the residents and to invite them to worship with us. The action research framework adequately describes goals of this project. The researcher hoped that the information presented on Bowen Family Systems Theory would elicit honest responses and feedback from the participants and uncover secrets and preconceived ideas and thoughts that may have hindered the congregation individually and collectively.

The researcher met with the congregation after Sunday morning worship service on January 11, 2015 and explained the nature and details of the project. Most of the congregation knew I was in a doctoral program and would be conducting research involving the church. The only persons identified in the study by name and position are the founding pastor, the current pastor and the assistant pastor. They will be named in the project because the project examines how change in leadership has impacted the ministry.

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[1] Bruce L. Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (Needham, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 2001), 178.

The results of the research will be shared with the congregation after the data has been analyzed. The congregation was receptive, and the pastor made the Kingdom Builders Class mandatory for adult members and provisions were made for the children's classes. Text messages and emails were sent to members who were not present at that meeting. Participant consent was indicated by a show of hands by everyone present.

Data was collected from February to March 2015. The sources of data for this study were pre and post interviews with the pastor, pre and post surveys completed by the participants, field notes pertaining to feedback from participants in the class and researcher observations. The researcher has been a member of this congregation for twenty-four years and has experienced the life of Triumphant in Christ International Ministries. This experience began when services were in a hotel, moved to a church building, and then to having services at the pastor's house and other locations before we bought the current property. Originally, the name of the church was Parkway Christian Center, and the name was changed in 2005 by the founding pastor. The church had a mortgage and was in debt, but the mortgage was paid off in 2014. Yet, the church has been slack in pursuing its vision, "Reaching Out to Impact, Equip and Demonstrate the Power of God through Excellence." In the twenty-five years of the church's existence, there has not been much numerical growth, but there has been spiritually growth. The membership peaked at seventy-five in 1999 and currently there are forty-seven members including children. I believe spiritual growth begets numerical growth and desire for the church to minister where it is planted and beyond. The researcher wanted to know how the congregation perceives our church, if they are committed to ministry, and do they have a desire to grow and be transformed to the church God called us to be.

The congregants were asked to respond to the following research questions. How do you want Triumphant in Christ International Ministries to be perceived in the community? Do you believe that our church can make an impact on our community? In the past month have you contacted a member who has not attended church in a month or more to check on his or her well-being and to let the member know he or she is missed? Do you fellowship with the visitors? Are church responsibilities shared among members (church maintenance, auxiliary leadership)? How many people or families have you invited to Triumphant in Christ International Ministries in the past thirty days? Have you participated in an outreach ministry in the past thirty days? Do you believe your spirit, soul and body are being nurtured and strengthened by the ministry? Is there a sense of excitement among members about the church's future? How would you define evangelism? Have you tithed in the past month? How many services have you attended?

The pastor participated in a pre and post interview rather than the pre and post survey because of her position as pastor and leader. The pastor and laity have different responsibilities and roles in the church, therefore, their perception of the church climate will differ. The interviews with the pastor were unstructured, face-to-face interviews. Some questions required a yes or no response with an explanation for the response (see Appendix A). Myers stated, "Unstructured interviews . . . have the flavor of in-depth conversations."[2] The pre-interview questions were developed by the researcher and the interview was conducted at the pastor's home. The researcher took notes and read the responses back to the pastor to insure accuracy. This worked well because the pastor seemed relaxed in the comfort of her home and the researcher directed the questioning.

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[2] William R. Meyers, *Research in Ministry: A Primer for the Doctor of Ministry Program* (Chicago, IL: Exploration Press, 2000), 60.

Triangulation of the Data

Triangulation provides validity to qualitative research "by analyzing a research question from multiple perspectives."[3] When data analyzed from three or more distinctive sources provide similar results, the research is considered valid. Guion presented five types of triangulation. They are: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, methodological triangulation and environmental triangulation.[4] This study will use methodological triangulation. "Methodological triangulation involves the use of multiple qualitative and/or quantitative methods to study the program. For example, results from surveys, focus groups, and interviews could be compared to see if similar results are being found. If conclusions from each of the methods are the same, then validity is established."[5] The methods used in this research are interviews, pre and post surveys, field notes, observation and feedback from the weekly Bible study class.

As previously mentioned the pastor was interviewed prior to the class. The interview consisted of seven questions designed to understand the pastor's perception of her role as pastor of the church and the congregation's readiness for change (Appendix A). The pastor is a Context Associate and she has read Chapter One, Ministry Focus, of the dissertation.

The class was held at Triumphant in Christ International Ministries for eight weeks. The pre-survey was administered to the class participants before class began on the first day of the class and the post-survey was completed at the eighth session. Four

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[3] Lisa A. Guion, David C. Diehl, and Debra McDonald, "Triangulation: Establishing the Validity of Qualitative Studies," *University of Florida IFAS Extension*, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (September 2002), 1.

[4] Ibid., 1.

[5] Ibid., 1.

class participants were Context Associates and have read Chapter One of the dissertation. The class participants have been members of the context from three to twenty-five years. There were sixteen questions/statements on the pre and post surveys intended to gather information regarding the participants' perception of their church, how they want the church to be perceived in the community, and their involvement in the ministry at the church. The question, "What do you think we need to do now?" was added to the post-survey and the researcher met with the class after the last session to listen and gather data. The survey is comprised of open-ended and closed-ended questions, and multiple choice questions (Appendix B).

Field notes were used to record participants' feedback in class and to record observations. Myers stated, "Field notes 'work' in large measure because implications for theory only become visible as one observes and records, over time, particular practices of ministry."[6] The researcher recorded the comments, behaviors and activities of the participants and reported that information in the study.

Creswell quoted Guba and Lincoln regarding establishing the trustworthiness of a study. Guba and Lincoln developed four criteria for authenticating trustworthiness. They are: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.[7] To satisfy the criteria of credibility the researcher will share the findings of the pre and post-test surveys, the researcher's interpretation of observations and the feedback from the class with the project participants. The participants can agree or disagree with the findings, determine if new information and revelations were revealed in the project and decide how to use the results to benefit the congregation.

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[6] Myers, *Research in Ministry*, 45.

[7] Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 197.

Transferability for this project will be reinforced by giving detailed descriptions of the setting and the participants. Consequently future readers of this study can determine if the project has characteristics that are similar to his or her research interests. Dependability refers to replication. The researcher intended to clearly describe every aspect of this project so that another researcher can teach and implement the project. Conformability will be established through checking and reviewing the data by peers and the faculty mentor.

Data will be presented as a descriptive narrative to interpret the findings and themes of the research. Tables and figures will also be utilized to report the data. Because the researcher is a member of the context, the pronouns "I" and "we" will be used occasionally in the narration when referring to the researcher and the researcher's relationship with context and congregation.

Implementation

This qualitative study used the case study design to analyze the effects of leadership changes on the congregation at Triumphant in Christ International Ministries. Three sources of data were collected and triangulated: one-on-one interviews with the pastor, pre and post surveys, researcher observation and field notes from an eight week class. The interview with the pastor was designed to elicit her views on leadership, vision for the church, and her perception of the congregations desire to grow. The surveys were used to gather information and measure change regarding participant perception of the

church, how they want the church to be perceived in the community and their involvement in the ministry at the church.

Initially, the focus of this project was evangelism because the researcher believed that the congregants would become involved in outreach ministry when they understood the power and significance of evangelism and the church would be recognized in the community. A class would be taught on evangelism to gain knowledge and practice in this discipline. Upon completion of the class, we would go to a housing development in the neighborhood to evangelize. However, as the project was discussed at focus group sessions at United Theological Seminary, the focus changed. It became apparent that we needed to examine ourselves and the changes that had occurred in our church before we could effectively evangelize. The Theoretical Foundation of the project, Bowen's Family Systems Theory, addresses the issue of changes in a system and became the focus of the project. Evangelism has a significant role in the project because it is consistent with the church's vision and promotes inclusion.

A total of fifteen participants attended the first class. Initially, the class was taught twice on the same day to accommodate the youth teachers and members arriving late. The second classes were held after the morning worship service, but this did not continue because meetings and other activities were conducted after the morning service.

Kingdom Builders Class Outline

Pre-Meeting

Prior to the first class session, the researcher met with the congregation after a morning worship service to explain the project. A brief description was given about the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary, the title of the project, the purpose of the project, and Bowen Family Systems Theory. As a congregation, we will look at the changes in leadership in the past nine years and how the changes may have affected the church. The Biblical Foundations for the project were shared, and the congregation was asked to participate in the study. The class will be during the Sunday school hour for eight weeks in February and March. The pastor asked all adults to attend, and made provisions for the children and youth to be taught. She stated this class will prepare us for ministry.

Week One

The pre-survey was completed by the participants. Fifteen people were present for the first session including four in the second session and they all completed a pre-survey. The foundational scriptures, Isaiah 61:1-2, Hebrews 5:12-14, 6:1-3, were read and it was explained how they relate to the project. Bowen Family Systems Theory was introduced and his work with schizophrenic patients and their parents was discussed. Bowen's observation from working with this population was the basis for the theory. He found that when one person or one event changes in a system, the whole system changes. Rabbi Friedman applied the family systems theory to churches and synagogues, and the five basis concepts of family systems theory that he presents were taught in this class. They

are: The Identified Person, Homeostasis, Differentiation of Self, The Extended Family Field, and Emotional Triangles. Acts 2:22-37, 41 was read and the class discussed how Peter was prepared, baptized with the Holy Spirit, and committed to Christ. He declared the Gospel and the Holy Spirit did work. This is an example for us.

The participants were attentive and seemed interested in the information presented. Several people stated they enjoyed the class and looked forward to the next class. Some members were initially concerned and guarded after the pre-meeting because they did not know what to expect when the researcher asked everyone to be open and honest about the effects of the changes we have experienced. Comments were made about the influence of the family of origin because people can relate to this.

Week Two

In this session the concept of the identified person was defined and Bowen Family Systems Theory (BFST) was reviewed. BFST views the family as an emotional unit, and when people spend time together they form an emotional unit. Systems theory focuses on the whole and not the individual, but systems theory has a lot to say about individual growth and maturity. The identified person is the person in the emotional unit considered to be the problem. This person is called the symptom bearer because he or she bears the symptoms of stress and anxiety in the family or congregation.[8] It is often believed that fixing the identified person will fix the problem but this is not the case. Changes must be made in the system. If not, the same problems will resurface in that person or someone

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[8] Edwin Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 19.

else.[9] Using the term identified person removes or decreases the stigma of a person being labeled "sick" or "the problem" because that person is bearing the stress of the system and the issue is systemic rather than individual. The participants read and identified how the five concepts of family systems theory were used in a scenario from Edwin Friedman's book *"Generation to Generation"*. The concept of identified person was well illustrated in the scenario.

Family systems theory was compared with the medical model. When a person sees a physician about a physical symptom in his or her body, the physician examines the body before treating the symptom. Likewise, as a congregation TICIM will not look at symptoms only, for example, lack of growth and community involvement. We will examine our congregational system to get some answers and plans. Friedman wrote, "Insight only works with people who are motivated to change."[10]

Week Three

In this session the concept of homeostasis was taught and the principles of the identified person were reviewed. Peter Steinke stated, "Established patterns are called homeostasis (literally, 'to stay the same')."[11] According to Friedman, "Family theory assumes that no matter what various members' quirks or idiosyncrasies, if the system exists and has a name, it had to have achieved some kind of balance in order to permit the

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[9] Friedman, 20.

[10] Ibid., 22.

[11] Peter L. Steinke, *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems* (Landham, MD: The Alban Institute, Rowan and Littlefield, 2006), 6.

continuity necessary to maintain its identity."[12] Triumphant in Christ International

Ministries has existed for twenty-five years and has homeostatic forces that have kept the

ministry going. "Keeping traditions and following rules are homeostatic forces."[13] The

class brainstormed and listed the churches traditions and rules and discussed how the

traditions fostered continuity. Then the class identified from that list what represented

order (tradition) and freedom. The things that represented freedom were not

denominational or traditional rules, and some things were added to the list. Parson and

Leas stated, "When a congregation lives between order and freedom, not allowing the

excesses of either to dominate, an atmosphere is created in which different voices and

approaches are honored. The tension becomes something life-giving, creative, and

renewing . . . ."[14]

The researcher wanted the class to recognize the strengths and resiliency of the

congregation, and the necessity for change. Honest, ongoing dialogue promotes freedom

and readiness for change in behavior and attitude. The class was given a handout taken

from Friedman's "*Generation to Generation*" of "some of the major changes that can

promote issues in the church and the death or retirement of a founder, builder, or

charismatic organizer"[15] was listed. I stated our church had experienced the death of our

founding pastor, Willie Collins, and asked the participants to talk about how his death

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[12] Friedman, 23.

[13] Steinke, 8.

[14] George Parson and Speed B. Leas, *The Manual: Understanding Your Congregation As A System* (New York, NY: The Alban Institute, 1993), 22.

[15] Friedman, 203-204.

impacted them personally and how his death impacted the life and growth of the church.

The responses were:

"I miss his presence, spirited life and songs."

"I did not see any changes in the ministry or the church. Because of the vision the transition was seamless."

"He was easy to talk to, I miss him."

"The ministry is better and has expanded."

"It sounded to me like Pastor Carolyn Collins was saying God killed Pastor Willie Collins so she could be pastor and that bothered me. [He was speaking of what Pastor Carolyn Collins has said numerous times about being the pastor. She stated that God revealed to her years ago that she would be a pastor but she did not understand how that would be because her husband was the pastor. Pastor Carolyn Collins does not believe in co-pastoring because it is like having two heads. When her husband passed and she became pastor, she said she understood why God revealed this to her]. Pastor Carolyn Collins shared some things with the class in response to what was said. She told us a few nights before her husband's death he prayed for her and passed the mantle of the ministry to her. He laid hands on her and prayed that God would lead and guide her as she led the church. After the prayer, he asked her to let him go home and she agreed. He was referring to heaven. He went to ICU that night and a few days later he died. Pastor Collins had shared this with the researcher and a few other people, but she had not shared this with the congregation. The person who raised the issue stated he continued to come to church after the pastor's death but he was bothered by what Pastor Carolyn Collins said. He said he understands now."

"I stopped coming to church for a while because Apostle Collins was not here and it was not the same." I asked what he meant by it was not the same. He stated it was like going to a family gathering and someone you cared for is not there, gone."

"The researcher stated the pastor's death caused and imbalance for her. We continued to have church services and went through the routine at what seemed like a fast pace. I wanted to slow down and take a look at things. It was almost like nothing happened."

When I asked again about changes in ministry and the functioning of the church since the

death of Pastor Willie Collins, the consensus was there was no noticeable change because

Pastor Carolyn Collins and her husband had the same vision. Pastor Carolyn Collins pointed out she did not change anything for a while.

The researcher shared a quote with the class. "To the extent that a system rushes to replace loss, its pain is lessened, and its potential capacity to change also is lessened."[16] I believe the effects of Pastor Willie Collins death were not as dramatic as one would expect because his position as leader and the office of pastor were filled soon after his death by a person, his wife, whom the congregation knew and accepted. Pastor Carolyn Collins planted the church with her husband and they shared the vision for the church. I agree with Bagby that the pain is lessened with a quick replacement, but the potential capacity to change is also lessened.

Week Four

The concept of differentiation of self was taught during this session. A handout was given to each participant outlining the definition of differentiation of self and how differentiation facilitates strength and stability in the congregation. Differentiation exemplifies the Christian lifestyle because it is knowing and being comfortable in your identity in Christ. "Self-Differentiation is the ability to define self to others and still stay connected to them-even in the midst of anxiety. It is taking responsibility for one's own emotional functioning."[17] Effective leaders are differentiated and the class participants are leaders in the church, the home or work place, and this skill is essential. A person must know their position and clearly state what is wanted and expected and not be moved

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[16] Daniel G. Bagby. "Book Reviews," *Review and Expositor* 102 (Summer 2005): 516, accessed 4-29-14, Atlas EBSCOhost.

[17] Joan Van Becelaere. "Healthy Congregations: An Introduction." (Lecture, Ohio- Meadville District), accessed January 10, 2015, www.ohiomeadville.org/podcast/CongEmotSystWebinar.ppt.

by what others say and do. As Christians our position needs to be consistent with the word of God and should be stated clearly in the church, when sharing the gospel with others, at any place and time. In this, we must be connected to people to share and demonstrate the love of God. The class read and discussed John 17: 14-19. Information was presented on how anxiety affects differentiation.

Week Five

The pastor requested a review session on the previous classes because an abundance of information had been shared in the past four weeks. She wanted to be sure the people understood the information and she asked the researcher to give more scriptural references, especially for differentiation of self. The participants did not have questions, but most of them could define identified person, homeostasis and differentiation of self. When homeostasis was discussed I asked what has held our congregation together for twenty-five years. The responses were: the word of God, love, vision, truth, trust in the leader, leader seeks the truth, faith and the leadership [pastor] lives above reproach. Jesus is the perfect example of differentiation of self. The participants read First Samuel 30:1-8 about David and discussed how he was differentiated and I Samuel 15 was read and we discussed how Saul was not differentiated. I asked the participants if they had reached out to church members who have not been to church recently, and a few had done so. This question is on the pre and post survey.

Anxiety is a factor in decision making and how one behaves. Richardson stated, "During times of upset, if just one key leader can be less anxious, relate well to others in

the group, and simply define self, it will have a beneficial impact on the life of the group as a whole."[18] An example of this was when the church mortgage was past due and we did not have the money to pay it. The pastor was concerned but she was prayerful and communicated with the congregation throughout the process. She presented in a non-anxious manner and the congregation remained calm and faithful with her and the situation was resolved. Several participants reflected on this and how different concepts of family systems theory were in operation in that situation. Other scriptures used for this session were Philippians 4:6, Psalms 94:19, and Isaiah 54:14.

Week Six

Emotional triangles were the subject of session six and the class had fun with this concept as it was related to the scenario discussed in lesson two. According to Friedman, "An emotional triangle is formed by any three persons or issues."[19] "The basic law of emotional triangles is that when any two parts of a system become uncomfortable with one another, they will "triangle in" or focus upon a third person or issue, as a way of stabilizing their own relationship."[20] Triangles are normal and exist in all systems. Emotional triangles can be helpful or harmful. When the third person in the triangle cares for both parties and/or issues and can maintain a non-anxious presence, stability and resolution can come into that situation. On the other hand, the third person in a triangle can take on the stress of the other parties if caught in the middle of unresolved issues. The

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[18] Ronald R. Richardson. "Bowen Family Systems Theory and Congregational Life," *Review and Expositor* 102 (Summer 2005): 389.

[19] Friedman, 35.

[20] Ibid.

more differentiated one is the less likely that person is to get caught up in an unhealthy emotional triangle.

Steinke contends that, "Because no emotional system stays calm, triangles always develop to bind anxiety. Moreover, triangles oppose change. They maintain reactivity."[21] Although no one mentioned a specific incident, the participants talked about how emotional triangles can hinder change in the church. For example, people talking among themselves about an issue at the church, like non-payment of the mortgage, could cause division and a decrease in financial support. Also triangles can consume time and energy needed to work on areas that need attention. The scriptures used for this session were Luke 12:13-21, John 8:1-12, Luke 10:38-42.

Week Seven

The extended family field was the subject for session seven. The session began with a review of emotional triangles and an explanation of the responsibility triangle. The concept of the responsibility triangle is that we cannot make another person responsible. Friedman stated, "The very act of trying to make others responsible preempts their own responsibility. This is equally true whether the issue is study habits, drinking, or failure to come to church."[22] If we decide to take responsibility for a person, then it must be done non-anxiously and without complaining. Otherwise, we will be caught in a triangle and take on the stress of that person and his or her problem regarding responsibility.

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[21] Steinke, *How Your Church Family Works*, 55

[22] Friedman, 49.

The extended family field refers to our family of origin plus other relatives (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins).[23] The family of origin was discussed in the first session and it is the family we grew up with, usually our parents and siblings. What we learned in our family of origin shapes our lives and influences our behavior and beliefs. We can modify and change what does not work and strengthen what does work for us. As Christians we are in God's family and we have the ability to be transformed and others will respond to those changes.

The transmission of negative behaviors and beliefs from the family of origin has been called generational curses by some. We examined this further by reading the following scriptures: Exodus 20:5-6, Psalm 103:12, Jeremiah 31:29-30, Jeremiah 31:31-34, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.

Week Eight

The last session on family systems theory included a review of the five concepts of family systems theory, scenarios, the First Lady becoming the pastor, and the departure of the assistant pastor. The pastor requested the presentation of scenarios so the participants could practice what they learned about Family Systems Theory. The post-survey was completed.

The election of the First Lady as pastor was addressed during the fourth session, but it was not the primary focus of that session. The participants did not offer additional information or insight on this subject. The researcher asked if the ministry had been affected in any way by having a female pastor now after having a male pastor, and the

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[23] Friedman, 31.

response was no. One person stated there is no difference in the ministry with a female

pastor, but with Pastor Carolyn Collins things are more elegant.

The assistant pastor, Andrew Cole, and some of his family members left TICIM

to plant a church. He and his family were founding members of the church and he had

numerous responsibilities at the church. He and his family reunited with Triumphant in

Christ International Ministries on the first Sunday in February 2015 and he attended the

Kingdom Builders Class and was present for this session. He maintained contact with the

pastor and other members of the church and was aware of the project. I talked to him

before this session about the question that would be posed to the participants regarding

the effect his leaving had on the congregation. He did not object and stated he did not

have any problems or concerns about the question being asked. The participant responses

were:

> "It hurts when a member of the body goes out on his own. You know he is led by the Spirit and you miss him."

> "Before he left he called me to talk about what we needed to do at church. He took the initiative to call and he would do the work if I did not do it. When he left it pushed me into taking responsibility to do what I needed to do."

> "I missed having fun with his grandchildren. I missed all of them."

> "He was concerned about the church being clean. He swept the vestibule and did a lot. I missed his children."

The researcher's perception is similar to the second response. The assistant pastor

was also a founding member, Director of the Prison Ministry and Sunday School

Superintendent. He taught Sunday school and Bible Study, opened the church on Sunday

morning and would not leave the church until Pastor Collins left. He fulfilled other

responsibilities as an Assistant Pastor such as ministering at Sunday morning worship

services and other times at the pastor's request. Pastor Cole's daughters and grandchildren were active in the church. Initially, when the Assistant Pastor left, Pastor Collins directed the Prison Ministry, taught Sunday school and Bible Study. I opened the church on Sunday mornings. The other responsibilities were assumed by other members. A positive outcome of Pastor Cole's leaving was other members had the opportunity to be involved in ministry and caring for the church.

We talked about the mortgage being paid off in June 2104 and everyone agreed we are excited and relieved. One member stated the mortgage pay-off is a testament to God's faithfulness and the member's faithfulness. Another person stated paying off the mortgage changed our focus from finances to taking care of the church property and ministry. The post-survey was completed and I thanked everyone for their participation. The question "what do you think we need to do now?" was added to the post-survey and was discussed the next week.

Post-Meeting One

Two additional sessions were held with the class participants to talk as a group about what to do now with what was learned in the Kingdom Builders Class. The question was asked, "What do we do now?" and the responses were: have services outside on the [church] grounds; invite people in the community to movie night and other activities involving children and families; connect with churches around us; form witness teams with churches in the neighborhood and two or three churches go into the neighborhood together.

The next question was "What is church growth?" and the responses were: each member growing in relationship with the Holy Spirit and having a revelation of the purpose of the church [TICIM]; being able to draw people; maturity and knowledge; the body of Christ growing and maturing in His [God's] word to draw others so we can spread His [God's] word; spiritual maturity.

The researcher believes people will come to a church when that church meets their needs. By observation, the following problems and needs in the community were identified by the members: poverty; lack of hope; need to clean-up; children do not have anything to hold on to; hunger, mental illness and addiction. As a congregation we do not have to provide all the services, but we can partner with other churches and agencies. We may also be able to provide space for services, for example, AA meetings and other support group meetings. The pastor and members seemed enthused about the possibilities for ministry in the neighborhood.

After service that Sunday a member told me he met a member of a church down the street from us at a community event and they talked about belonging to churches on the same street. The man said he has seen our church but he did not know it was a church. The church is a metal building and does not look like a traditional church, but there is a sign on the corner of the lot. The researcher shared this information with the pastor.

Post-Meeting Two

This meeting was called "Taking it to the Streets" because we prepared to go to the housing development in the neighborhood. The participants were given a handout with the Roman Roads and information about ministering to people. We did a couple of

role plays demonstrating an introduction, leading a person to salvation and leading a person in rededication. One hindrance to evangelism is people do not feel capable or comfortable evangelizing. The role play and instructions helped put people at ease, and they will be paired with people who are experienced in evangelism.

We went to a housing development in the neighborhood two weeks after completing the Kingdom Builders Class to evangelize, give gifts to the children and invite the residents to worship with us. Our goals were to minister to the people and to make the neighborhood aware of our ministry. Colorful four by six cards were printed with information about the church to leave with people we talked to and at homes of residents we did not talk to. Ten people went out including the researcher and an eleven-year-old. We were in the housing development for an hour and met at the church afterwards to report on the experience. Three people prayed the prayer of salvation and two people were reassured of their salvation. Everyone, including the child, was stirred up and talked about going to other areas in the community.

Pre-Interview with Pastor Carolyn Collins

Pastor Collins was interviewed prior to the Kingdom Builders Class to get her views on leadership, being a pastor, and her aspirations for the ministry. She did not complete the pre and post-surveys, but she attended all of the classes.

1. What is the most rewarding thing about being a pastor?

"Seeing people's lives change when I impact someone's life."

2. How did you transition from First Lady to pastor?

"I have always been a leader and I took on the responsibility, and it is not the first time. When my father passed I became the leader of the [family] business. With ministry the difference is preparing a message from week to week. I had a message when I led praise and worship. Before my husband passed my message changed from teaching to preaching. The Lord had told me I was going to become a pastor, so it was no transition, but a name change and position change."

3. How has your leadership style changed since you became the pastor?

"There is no change in my style. I believe in bringing people forward to be strong. I want to bring out the best in others because I don't want them to depend on me. I train others, especially in ministry."

4. When you make a decision and there is opposition, is peace valued above all else?

"Yes, I have to be still and wait for the Lord to tell me what to do."

5. Talk about your comment "I've been sleep for ten years."

"I think the ministry was stagnant and I could have done more, but now I am awake. I didn't make changes because I did not want to offend Pastor Andrew Cole. Pastor Cole was close to Pastor [Willie] Collins. He was his right hand man. I believe he wanted to be pastor of the church when my husband passed, but I was elected. I did not want to hurt him, so I did not change things. He was elected assistant pastor and maintained his duties."

6. Do you want the congregation to grow?

"Yes."

7. Do you believe the congregation wants to grow?

"No, I think they are satisfied. I don't see them reaching out and we are not demonstrating the life of Christ."

8. Where do you see the church in five years?

"Growing to be the church God called us to be. To be truly concerned about people and exhibiting the life of Christ. The gifts should be manifesting in the body of Christ."

Post-interview with Pastor Carolyn Collins

1. We had eight weeks of teaching on Family Systems Theory with good participation from the congregation. Have you noticed any changes in the members?

"I have not interacted with them enough since the class ended to notice change. In the class they were able to answer questions pertaining to Family Systems Theory."

2. During the class and since the class ended has there been a change in your leadership style? Are you doing anything differently?

"I have not had an opportunity to do anything differently. I observe triangles now, especially when I watch TV."

The researcher ask about a recent incident when Pastor Collins corrected a deacon about serving communion. She talked to him about this that day after service and the situation was taken care of immediately. Pastor Collins responded:

"I always take care of things immediately. There are situations you are not aware of, but this was not unusual."

3. Do you believe the congregation wants to grow?

"Yes. Since the class I think they are serious about going out [into the neighborhood] and I continue to teach the word on evangelism."

4. How do you picture the church in five years?

"I don't look that far. I am thinking about what we need to do now. I believe God wants us to evangelize the unchurched and we can help the community. I need direction from God."

The researcher shared that the project of a D. Min. colleague is on the unchurched. She found that although many unchurched left the church, they are waiting for the church to come to them. She stated we may not reconnect them to the church, but to the function of the church which is faith in God. (Stephanie

Wilson, March 23, 2015, focus group discussion) Pastor Collins agreed and we talked about reconnecting the unchurched.

Data Analysis

Pre and Post Interviews with Pastor Collins

The pre-interview was conducted at the pastor's home on February 5, 2015 and the post-interview was at the church on March 31, 2015. The interviews were approximately thirty minutes and the pastor was cooperative and responded to all the questions. Pastor Collins did not complete the pre and post-surveys, but she read them and was familiar with the content. Pastor Collins reportedly did not see much change in the congregants after the class because she was interviewed two days after the class concluded, but she noted they could answer questions about Family Systems Theory during the class. She believes the congregation is serious about ministering in the neighborhood since completing the class. An increase in neighborhood ministry was a predicted outcome of the study.

Pastor Collins did not perceive changes in her leadership style, but the researcher interpreted some of the changes she instituted in the church during and after the class as changes in leadership. The researcher observed Pastor Collins taking more of a hands-on approach in areas that had been lacking attention for a while, for example, the kitchen and the music area. In March, before the class ended, the pastor, another member, and a hired person, cleaned and organized the kitchen and the music area. Additional electrical receptors were installed and there was a marked improvement in the appearance of the church. The congregation responded positively to the clean-up. One young female

member twirled around in the kitchen because it was uncluttered. Another lady said she thought she was in a new church. Pastor Collins expects everyone to help maintain the organization and we plan to hire someone to clean the building.

During this time, the researcher noticed that the pastor confronted some issues soon after they occurred. As previously mentioned, she talked to a deacon about giving a child communion prior to public acknowledgement of salvation, and she also conferred with the sound technician about being absent from church and his responsibilities. The concept of differentiation of self was taught in the Kingdom Builders Class, and a leader's influence on congregations, families and in other areas was expounded.

Pastor Collins has initiated other changes since the completion of the class. Announcements are not read at the end of service. Calendars with all the services, outreach ministry dates and special occasions are in the entrance of the church. A table has been placed in the vestibule and the calendars, visitor's cards, pens and cards with information about the church services are on this table. Traditionally, when the worship services ended, the congregation would come together in a circle, hold hand and the benediction would be given. Now people remain at their seats and hold hands with the person next to them when the benediction is given. A light breakfast is served on Sunday morning at 9:00 a.m. and Pastor Collins has arrived at church early to help prepare breakfast. Because Pastor Collins did not do this prior to the class, the researcher's perception is that Pastor Collins was influenced by the teachings on Family Systems Theory.

Description of Participants

The participants in this study are members of Triumphant in Christ International Ministries and all of them profess to be Christians. A total of twenty-two people attended at least one Kingdom Builders class from February 8, 2015 to March 29, 2015. Sixteen people completed the pre-survey, with thirteen completing the pre-survey at the first class and three completing the pre-survey at the second class because they were not present for the first class. Two visitors attended several of the sessions (one person attended five and one attended four) but they did not complete pre and post-surveys. Thirteen people completed pre and post-surveys and the findings and results of the study are based on the thirteen participants' responses and the researcher's observations of the congregation.

Of the thirteen participants completing the surveys, seven were females ranging in age from twenty-one to eighty-three. Six males completed the pre and post surveys and their age range was twenty-five to above seventy years old. The participants were not identified by their names hoping that name anonymity would foster honest responses.

Pre and Post-Survey Results

There were fifteen items on the pre-survey and sixteen items on the post-survey. The questions and comments on the surveys are closed ended and open ended requiring yes/no responses, some with an explanation. Two questions ask the participants to give a number: How many people have you invited to church, How many services have you attended? The question, "What do you think we should do now?" was added to the post-survey as a catalyst for discussion regarding future planning for outreach ministry.

The following table shows the "Yes" results of the pre and post surveys open ended questions:

Table 1.1: Pre and Post Yes Responses

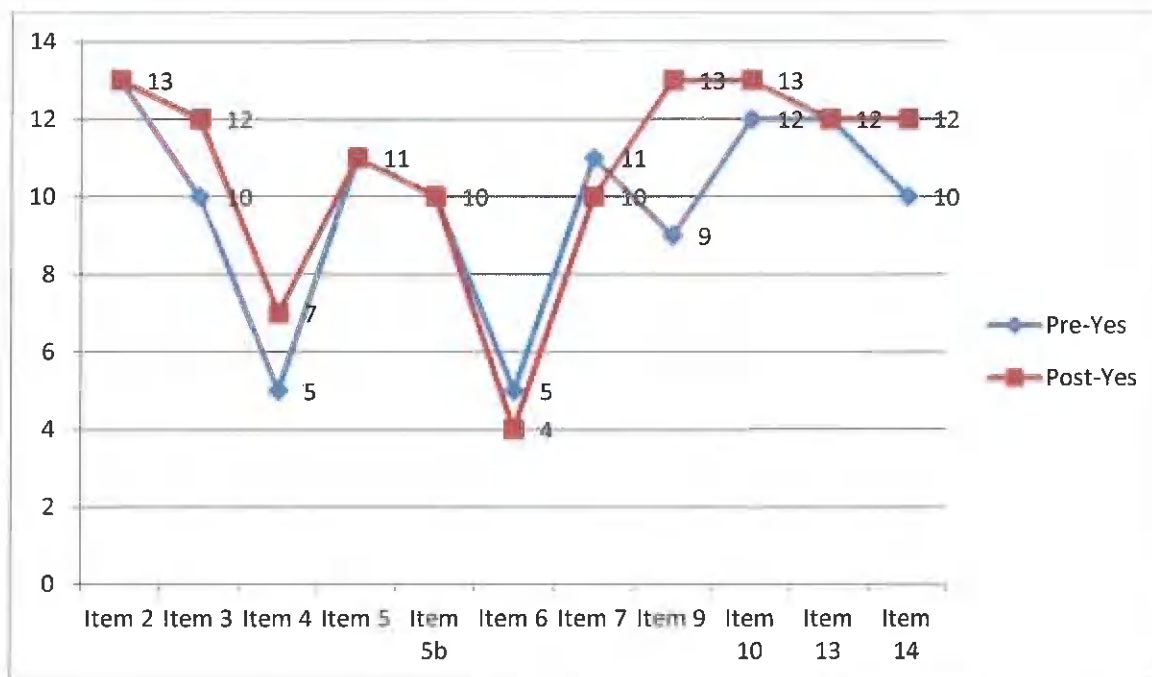| Item Number	Pre Yes	Post Yes
Item 2	13	13
Item 3	10	12
Item 4	5	7
Item 5	11	11
Item 5b	10	10
Item 6	5	4
Item 7	11	10
Item 9	9	13
Item 10	12	13
Item 13	12	12
Item 14	10	12

Figure1. Pre and Post-survey "Yes" responses.

Thirteen pre and post-surveys were completed. The second page of one pre-survey was not completed and the second page of one post-survey was not completed. On the pre-survey one participant did not respond to items 3, 6, and 7. On the post-survey one participant did not respond to item 3.

The graph illustrates the changes that occurred in the items listed on Table 1 and indicates positive changes in attitudes and behaviors occurred as a result of the class. Items 2, 5, 5b, and 13 had the same number of responses on the pre and post-surveys. Although some participants gave different responses for items 5 and 5b on the pre and post-survey, the total was the same. Item 6 decreased by one (five to four), but a decrease indicates progress for this item. This data corresponds to positive changes in attitudes and behaviors of the participants. Table 2 will give a breakdown of the "No" responses to the items on Table 1, and all of the responses to the surveys will be presented and analyzed.

Table 1.2: Pre and Post "No" responses

Item Number	Pre No	Post No
Item 2	0	0
Item 3	2	0
Item 4	8	6
Item 5	2	2
Item 5b	3	3
Item 6	7	9
Item 7	1	3
Item 9	4	0
Item 10	1	0
Item 13	0	0
Item 14	1	0

Pre and Post Survey Results

1. How do you want Triumphant in Christ International Ministries to be perceived in the

community?

Pre-survey responses: " a spiritual hospital"; "as a body of Christ, love"; "as people of God who does His will"; "a loving and accepting church"; "as a beacon of hope and a place that you can come to get your spiritual needs met"; "as a church that is teaching and walking in the love of God"; "an outreach word ministry"; "as a light that impacts the community and leads them to Christ"; "good"; "as a place to worship and get help when needed. A place where generations will grow"; "an open source of light, truth, spirit and the word of God. True manifestation of God's word, truth, and power"; "a place of real believers and innovative"; "a blessing to the people, a light to the community, a place to learn about Jesus". (Thirteen responses)

Post-survey responses: "as a church that loves God and his people"; friendly, growing in the faith (word)"; "a welcoming environment where the love of God is evident"; "a ministry built on the teaching of love"; "as a light a place where people come to be feed the word and a place that the lost can come to have their spiritual needs met"; "a stable, trustworthy, refuge, prosperous, peaceful strong ministry"; "as a beacon of light to the world and community. A place where the word of God truly goes forward"; "a church where you are loved and can grow in the things of God, be more Christ-like"; "a house of refuge and relief from life's storms"; "a church of 'true' Christians"; "Good". (Eleven responses)

The congregant's responses have similar themes. They want their church to be perceived

as a loving, caring, safe environment where people can be taught the word of God, grow

spiritually, and experience the power of God. This theme was consistent in the pre and

post responses.

2. Do you believe that our church can make an impact on our community? Yes   No

Pre-survey responses: (Yes) Thirteen   Post-survey responses: (Yes) Thirteen

Please explain:

Pre-survey responses: "yield to the person of the Holy Spirit. Let your light [shine] that men may see" "because of the truth being taught and living what we teach"; "because we

do learn to love and walk in love that helps the community to 'give us a chance' and we in turn can teach them to do the same. This domino effect only increases the strength and authority of the body of Christ"; "by demonstrating God's power to heal, deliver, proclaim the Gospel"; "our continued outreach events such as the community fair and more events like this will show the community how God's love truly is"; "by teaching and walking in the love of God"; "it takes time we going to have a crowd one day"; "we are surrounded by other churches, but none can compare with the measure of love displayed here"; "by reaching out and sharing the word that we have here. By providing the truth about God and how [simple it] is for anyone to partake of . Also providing for some physical needs of the community while showing how God can provide for ALL NEEDS"; "I think our church is different from others because we are a Bible teaching, interactive, Spirit filled, not as traditional as most of the other black churches, music format, beliefs, etc."; "the people at our church are loving, [have] a heart to please God, the word of God goes forth here at T.I.C." (Eleven responses)

Post survey responses:

"showing the love of God" "I believe that our church is impacting the community because the word of God is going forward"; "living (word) love"; "with continued outreach ministries and community events we will be a beacon of light"; "this ministry walks in honest unconditional love. We don't just smile to 'get you in the doors' and then condemn you once you become a member. We actually walk in love"; "by doing the vision that God gave us, reaching impacting, equipping and demonstrating God's power"; "I've seen a lot in this part of town and a positive encouraging, uplifting not down grading despair of hopelessness"; "by breaking traditions and stigmas of bondage, racial and poverty, by reaching out to impact, equip, and demonstrate the power of God through excellence"; "the pastor and congregation have a heart [to] share Jesus"; "this community is poverty stricken. The Word of God is a prospering and flourishing gospel. The Word of God is seed to be planted in this community"; "be more involved in the area of giving [to] the surround churches and go out witnessing the way we use to do". (Eleven responses)

Thirteen participants responded to this question, and they believe our church can make an impact on our community, but two people did not give an explanation. The responses from the pre and post surveys are similar in that the participants stated the church can impact the community by demonstrating love. This love can be demonstrated by being visible in the community, proclaiming the Gospel, exhibiting God's power, and providing for physical needs of the community.

3. Please consider the statement: It is easy to summarize for visitors and non-members how our congregation differs from other congregations in the area. Yes   No

Pre-survey responses: (Yes) Ten   (No) Two (one person did not respond)
Post-survey responses: (Yes) Twelve   (No)   (none one person did not respond)

Two more participants reported they could summarize how our congregation differs from other congregations in the community on the post-survey. The majority of the churches in the neighborhood have been there longer than we have and we know the denominations, pastors and some of the members. Some churches in the neighborhood have a reputation for being political, community activist or evangelistic. Triumphant in Christ International Ministries participated in a community event on prayer with other churches in the area.

4. Please consider the statement: In the past month I have contacted a member who has not attended church in a month or more to check on his or her well-being and to let the member know he or she is missed.

Pre-survey responses: (Yes) Five   (No) Eight
Post survey responses: (Yes) Seven   (No) Post Six

The results show improvement in contacting absent members, but not as much as the researcher expected. A lot of time was spent in the class teaching and discussing differentiation of self. We must be assured of our identity in Christ and maintain contact with others in and out of the church. The increase of two participants contacting absent members is a positive change.

5. There is a time of fellowship during the morning worship service. Do you fellowship with the visitors?

Pre-survey responses: (Yes) Eleven (No) Two
Post-survey responses: (Yes) Eleven (No) Two

b. Do you fellowship with them after service?
Pre-survey responses: (Yes) Ten (No) Three
Post-survey responses: (Yes) Ten (No) Three

There were no changes in the pre and post responses regarding fellowship with visitors. The researcher considered that some members have church responsibilities after service, for example, taking care of finances and sound equipment, and they may not have taken the time to fellowship after service or the visitors were gone when they completed their duties. Regardless, the researcher believes there is no reason every member cannot take the time to welcome visitors. The other factor could be individual personalities.

6. Please consider this statement: Some members talk among themselves in groups or cliques when there is a misunderstanding or concern about ministry instead of talking to the pastor. Yes   No

Pre-survey responses: (Yes) Five (No) Seven (one person did not respond)
Post-survey responses: (Yes) Four (No) Nine

The results indicate fewer people believed members were talking among themselves rather than to the pastor about ministry concerns. The majority of the participants did not see this as a problem. The concept of emotional triangles addressed how triangles in the church can cause problems and division.

7. Please consider this statement: Church responsibilities are shared among the members,

   For example, church maintenance and auxiliary leadership. Agree   Disagree

Pre-survey responses: Agree (Yes) Eleven   Disagree (No) One (one person did not respond)
Post-survey responses: Agree (Yes) Ten   Disagree (No) Three

There was a slight decrease in the post-survey responses indicating most

of the participants believe church responsibilities are not shared among the members.

 Based on the researchers observations and conversations with some members and the

pastor, there is a desire to have more involvement in church maintenance. According to

the survey results, this continues to be a concern.

8. Pre-survey: How many worship services (Sunday school, Sunday morning worship,

   Sunday evening worship) did you attend at Triumphant in Christ International

   Ministries since January 4, 2015?

The total number of services the participants attended was eighty-five. Two people did

not answer this question.

Post-survey: How many worship services (Sunday school, Sunday morning worship,

Sunday evening worship) did you attend at Triumphant in Christ International Ministries

from February 8, 2015 to March 29, 2015?

The total number of services participants attended was 165. One person did not answer.

The number of services participants attended during the research period increased by

eighty services. The former assistant pastor and his family returned to the church on

February 1, 2015, and they did not attend prior to this time. Therefore, the attendance of

three more people was included in the post test results, but their attendance does not totally account for the increase of eighty services attended. Church attendance increased, especially Sunday school because the Kingdom Builders class was held at that time and the pastor asked all the members to attend the class.

9. Pre-survey: Have you tithed consistently (at least once a month) in the past year or since you have been a member of this church? Yes No

Pre-survey responses: (Yes) Nine   (No) Four

Post-survey: Have you tithed at Triumphant in Christ International Ministries from February 8, 2015 to March 29, 2015? Yes   No

Post-survey responses: (Yes) Thirteen

There was an increase in tithing, but again the former assistant pastor and his adult children were not members before February 2015 and their tithes were not included in the pre-survey results. There was one participant other than the former assistant pastor and his family who could have tithed and did tithe during the study and this represents a positive change.

10. Pre-survey: Have you given offerings consistently (at least once a month) in the past year or since you have been a member of this church? Yes   No

Pre-survey responses: (Yes) Twelve (No) One

Post-survey: Have you given offerings at Triumphant in Christ International Ministries from February 8, 2015 to March 29, 2015? Yes   No

Post-survey responses: (Yes) Thirteen

All of the participants reported giving offerings during the research period and this is a positive change.

11. How many people or families have you invited to Triumphant in Christ International Ministries in the past six months?

Pre-survey: Total of fifty-one people were invited

Post-survey: How many people or families have you invited to Triumphant in Christ International Ministries from February 8, 2015 to March 29, 2015?

Post-survey: Total of forty-seven people were invited

Fewer people were invited to the church after the pre-survey, but more participants invited people after the pre-survey and during the study. The pre-survey showed that four participants did not invite anyone to church, and one person did not answer the question. The post-survey indicated everyone invited someone to church, and one person did not answer the question. The assistant pastor and his family have to be considered and they could account for three people inviting someone to church during the study. If so, it is encouraging that they would extend an invitation to others shortly after re-instating their membership. However, it is possible that other participants invited someone as well. The researcher considers the results a positive change because every participant responding to the question invited someone to church. I believe the participants heeded the teaching and extended an invitation to others to join them in worship services. This demonstrates an effort to be open and inclusive.

12. Pre-survey: Please check the ministry you have participated in the past year. Check all that apply: Nursing Home, Prison Ministry, Youth Ministry, Women's Ministry, Men's Ministry, Music Ministry.

Pre-survey: Nursing Home-four, Prison Ministry-two, Youth Ministry-six, Women's Ministry-three, Men's Ministry-two, Music Ministry-six (total twenty-three). Four people were not involved in any of the ministries.

Post-survey: Please check the ministry in which you have participated in from February 8, 2015 to March 29, 2015. Check all that apply.

Post-survey: Nursing Home-five, Prison Ministry-two, Youth Ministry-five, Women's Ministry-two, Men's Ministry-three, Music Ministry-five (total twenty-two).

The post-survey showed a decrease in ministry involvement by one. Involvement increased in the Nursing Home and Men's Ministry's and remained the same for the Prison Ministry. Four people were not involved in any ministries.

13. Do you believe your spirit, soul and body are being nurtured and strengthened by the ministry? Yes   No

Pre-survey: (Yes) Twelve One person did not answer this question.
Post-survey: (Yes) Twelve One person did not answer the question.

No changes in pre and post results. All responding participants believe they are being nurtured and strengthened by the ministry at TICIM.

14. Please consider this statement: There is a sense of excitement among members about our church's future. Agree (Yes) Disagree (No)

Pre-survey: (Yes) Ten   (No) One   Two people did not answer the question.
Post-survey: (Yes) Twelve   One person did not answer the question.

Most of the participants responded affirmatively on the pre-survey and all that responded to the post-survey affirmed their excitement about the future of the church. There is hope and we have much to look forward to.

15. Which of the following best describes your understanding of evangelism: praying and seeking the will of God, sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with the unsaved only, sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with the saved and unsaved, a five-fold ministry.

Pre-test: Nine people selected sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with the saved and unsaved; two people selected two items, and one person selected sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with the unsaved only. One person did not answer the question.

Post-survey: Eleven people selected sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with the saved and unsaved; two people selected five-fold ministry, and one person did not answer the question.

The researcher anticipated that the participants would select "evangelism is sharing the gospel with the saved and unsaved." This concept was taught in the class and the results of the surveys demonstrated that some of the participants have additional knowledge regarding evangelism.

16. This question was added to the post-survey. What do you think we need to do now?

"continue the path we are on but go out more"; "spend time with the Holy Spirit individually and congregationally; pray in the Holy Ghost specifically about our place"; "continue to evangelize"; "just continue to grow in the spirit"; I need more training, learning, praying, ect. so that I may be a better role model for my church and community, family, friend, ect."; "do what God has called us to do, take His Gospel out and fulfill the vision"; "continue to move forward in the instruction of God and the Holy Spirit and continuously do that in love and excellence; we must never lose focus because it will be the unsaved that truly suffers"; "outreach more to the community"; "spread the word"; "continue what we are doing"; "go forth"; "pray." One person did not answer the question.

The post-survey was completed at the conclusion of the last Kingdom Builders Class. We did not have time to discuss "What do we want to do now?" and we discussed this the next Sunday in Sunday school and that session is recorded in this paper.

Summary of Learning

This project took an unexpected turn the fourth semester which required additional research and soul-searching. I have been a member of Triumphant in Christ International Ministries for almost twenty-five years and I love my church, the pastor and the people. I continued to grow spiritually and was active and involved in ministry at the church, but something was missing. The church is a small church and has not grown much in numbers since the founding pastor died. The members seemed to be content with church as usual, but many of them were not actively involved in ministry, especially outreach ministry. The church is located in the heart of a poverty stricken neighborhood that experiences crime and other social and spiritual problems. What could we do? How could we minister to the needs of those around us and hopefully grow as a church.

My thoughts were to teach the congregation the significance and power of evangelism and as a result, they would be motivated and prepared to go into the neighborhood and evangelize. During focus group discussions the plans for my research project began to change and by the fourth semester the focus of the project was not evangelism and missions but Family Systems Theory. The Theoretical Foundation for the project was Bowen Family Systems Theory, and it became apparent that my context needed to examine itself. Our church has experienced significant changes in the past nine years. Our founding pastor died, his wife was elected pastor, and the assistant pastor and his family left to plant a church. Our church had not addressed these changes collectively and I agreed we needed to do so before we could effectively fulfill the vision God

entrusted with us. That vision is "Reaching out to Impact, Equip and Demonstrate the Power of God through Excellence."

I have gained useful knowledge and understanding about Bowen Family Systems Theory, and Family Systems Theory, which is based on Bowen's Theory. Rabbi Friedman studied with Murray Bowen and Friedman developed five concepts of Family Systems Theory and applied them to churches and synagogues. Systems theory considers the whole rather than individual parts of the whole. Ronald Richardson stated, "Change in one member in a congregation can affect the whole. Most often the change in that one member has been preceded by changes in others. The system is the total of all the members and their different actions and reactions."[24] We had major changes to consider and Family Systems Theory helped us look at the changes objectively.

The five concepts Friedman developed were taught to the congregation at TICIM church for eight weeks. I hypothesized that when the congregation addressed the changes that occurred in the church, we would commit to minister to the needs of the neighborhood and become an open and inclusive church. The hypothesis was proven valid.

The pre and post-surveys, the field notes from the class discussions and researcher observations revealed positive changes in attitudes and behaviors of the participants. Item seven asked about shared responsibilities among members at the church, and the number decreased on the post-survey. This indicated the majority of participants do not believe members are sharing the responsibilities of maintaining the church or sharing responsibility in auxiliary leadership. Auxiliary leadership refers to positions that are

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[24] Ronald W. Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership, and Congregational Life* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 28.

appointed by the pastor. From my experience the problem is keeping the church clean and organized and not with auxiliary leadership. Hiring someone to clean the church and maintain the lawn is being considered. Members performed these duties for several years because the church could not pay to have the maintenance done. The church does not have a mortgage now and these tasks can be added to the payroll.

The participants' comments overwhelmingly support neighborhood ministry and the comments were encouraging and informative. The pre and post-surveys showed there are members who do not fellowship with visitors, and some participants did not contact members who had not attended church for a month or more. This behavior contradicts evangelism and church growth, but only two people reportedly did not fellowship with visitors. However, the majority of the participants greet, talk to and interact with visitors. First time visitors are greeted from the pulpit. The congregation had an opportunity to share their thoughts when the results were presented.

The participants responded well to the Kingdom Builders Class and some participants reported they applied the information they received to other areas of their lives. One person purchased Friedman's book, "*Generation to Generation.*" A person working on a Master's in Psychology reported using the class notes to help write a paper. The class gave the congregation an opportunity to talk about the changes in leadership together and to assess the ministry. There was a lot of material to cover and the class time went beyond an hour sometimes.

According to the participants, the changes in leadership did not have a substantial impact on the church because Pastor Collins had the same vision as her husband and the

church knew her and had a positive relationship with her. It was a smooth transition and the interesting statements were about how nothing changed. Revelations 14:13 states, ". . . Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them" (NRSV). Pastor Willie Collins' deeds (works) have followed him through the ministry of his wife and the church God birthed through both of them. Pastor Carolyn Collins worked from the foundation her husband laid, and now by her own admission and actions, she is ready to lead the church into transformation. When there is a death of a leader, it can be beneficial and comforting not to have many changes because the lost is a major change. There is a time for change, and the time is now for TICIM.

A comment about the assistant pastor's departure was revealing and true. The person's comments were about having to become responsible for his duties at the church because he could not rely on the assistant pastor to do it for him or remind him of his responsibilities. Therefore, the member stepped-up and accepted responsibility for the tasks he had committed to. Pastor Collins assumed some of Pastor Cole's responsibilities when he left, and the church was better for it. For example, she began teaching Bible Study and continues to do so. She also teaches the adult Sunday school class more often.

On April 18, 2015, we went to a housing development in the neighborhood to share the Gospel, information about our church, and to give gifts to the children. There were four teams of two and we spent an hour in the neighborhood. Three people accepted Christ as their savior and two people rededicated their lives to Christ. We spoke to numerous people who were Christians and we invited everyone we met to come and

worship with us. The following Sunday two people from the neighborhood attended the morning worship service.

Suggested Improvements for the Future

Two months was a short period of time to analyze behavior and attitude changes that may require life-style adjustments. The congregation seems to have a better understanding of the significance of connecting and interacting with people to demonstrate care and concern. These are human needs and people respond positively when their needs are met and they are receptive to word of God. TICIM is currently emphasizing the Youth and Young Adult Ministries and the response has been positive. The young people want to participate and show up for church services, rehearsals, and recently they have voluntarily helped with food preparation and clean-up. TICIM had a church anniversary the month of June 2015, and there was a noticeable change in the participation of the congregation. Pastor Collins is more open and accepting of different genres of music. There is much to do and we will make progressive changes as we go, one person at a time.

Family Systems Theory is a way of thinking and the pastor wants the congregation to have refresher classes once a month for a while to help maintain what was learned and to introduce new information. The author will propose that interested members participate in the prison ministry at least once before going through the formal training and committing to the ministry. This can relieve them of pre-conceived ideas or misinformation about the ministry and they can make a committed decision. TICIM will

continue to explore ways to minister to the community and follow-up on the suggestions received during the class.

Six months after the completion of the project a young adult member suggested the church reach out to the community by ministering to children and staff at neighborhood daycare centers. The young adult member and another member visited two daycare centers and took the children books to read, coloring books, activity books, crayon and toys. All of the materials were labeled with the church's name, address, the pastor's name and the church's email address. This outreach involved TICIM in the neighborhood in a unique and interesting way. This outreach future validates the hypothesis of the research, that the congregation would minister to the needs of the neighborhood when the changes in the ministry were addressed. In keeping with Family Systems Theory, one member presented an idea and with the assistance of another member, children and adults were ministered to. Ministering to children is ministering to their families because changes in a child's behavior and beliefs can initiate changes in the family.

Triumphant in Christ International Ministries held a community fair to acquaint the neighborhood with the church and to fellowship with the people in the community. The theme for the event was "The Great Savior's Roundup." The neighborhood Fire Department and the Shelby County Sheriff's Department partnered with the church in this event. Information about TICIM's history, tenets, and ministries was provided to the attendees. Ministry booklets on various topics such as prayer, salvation, and confessions for children, were given out. Prizes, food, a karate demonstration and music were all part of the fun and ministry. The community's response was positive. Several families

attended and many children in the neighborhood came because they were attracted to the waterslide, the bouncer and games. A church in Greenville, MS that TICIM fellowships with, brought a van load of people to the community fair. Their presence contributed to the joy of the day and the relationship between the churches was strengthened. The members told us they plan to replicate this event in their community in Greenville, MS.

Six months after completing the project the members of TICIM continue to have the zeal and commitment to follow through on the decision to minister to the neighborhood where it is planted. Approximately eighty five percent of the membership participated in the community fair and worked in various capacities to make the event successful. TICIM wants to be known in the community as a teaching ministry that is available to people with love and support. The pastor was visible and welcomed the attendees collectively and personally.

I believe the participants would have been more verbal and open if the pastor had not been in the class. I believe some comments were guarded to avoid offending the pastor. As a congregational family we do most things together and benefit from the support and insight shared among us. Pastors are responsible for the message and messengers that come before their congregation, and the pastor's class attendance assured her that the content was relevant and scripturally based. She also wanted to learn about FST because leaders are in the position to navigate changes. We learned about Family Systems Theory together and we will carry it out together. Many members are identifying triangles and avoiding unhealthy triangles with humor and satisfaction.

For future improvement the pre and post-survey questions would be refined. It would be helpful if the survey questions could be piloted to get feed-back for clarity and

to have more questions that elicit emotions and core beliefs of the participants. I would quickly scan the surveys to be sure they are completed while I am with the participant. I plan to do a follow-up survey in a year to determine if the changes have been sustained or improved. The information could also serve as a planning tool for the church.

This project can be replicated at churches experiencing changes in leadership, demographic changes or any change that affects the congregation. The format can be changed to accommodate the needs of the congregation. For example, instead of a Bible study, the church leaders can come together to learn and implement the principles of Family Systems Theory. The principles of FST are congruent with scripture because there are accounts throughout the Bible of one person making a difference in the lives of other people, including nations and the world. The power of one works negatively as well as positively. According to Romans 5:17 (NRSV), "If, because of one man's trepass, death exercised dominion through that one [Adam], much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ." Christ is our example and our champion. As we follow Him we can become vehicles of change in people.

APPENDIX A

PRE AND POST INTERVIEWS

Pre-Interview Questions for Pastor Carolyn Collins

1. What is the most rewarding thing about being a pastor?

2. How did you transition from First Lady to pastor?

3. How has your leadership style changed since you became the pastor?

4. When you make a decision and there is opposition, is peace valued above all else?

5. Talk about your comment, "I've been sleep for ten years."

6. Do you believe the congregation wants to grow?

7. Where do you see the church in the next five years?

Post-Interview Questions for Pastor Collins

1. We had eight weeks of teaching on Family Systems Theory with good participation from the congregation. Have you noticed any changes in the members?

2. Since or during the Kingdom Builders class, has there been a change in your leadership style? Are you doing anything differently?

3. Do you believe the congregation wants to grow?

4. How do you picture the church in five years?

APPENDIX B

PRE-SURVEY

A MODEL OF RENEWAL FOR A NEIGHBORHOOD CHURCH

PRE-TEST FOR KINGDOM BUILDERS CLASS

Date: _____

Gender: Female   Male

Age Range: under 18   19-24   25-34   35-45   46-58   58-70   70 and above

1. How do you want Triumphant in Christ International Ministries to be perceived in the community?

2. Do you believe that our church can make an impact on our community? Yes   No

   Please explain:

3. Please consider the statement: It is easy to summarize for visitors and non-members

how our congregation differs from other congregations in the area. Yes   No

4. Please consider the statement: In the past month I have contacted a member who has

not attended church in a month or more to check on his or her well-being and to let the

member know he or she is missed. Yes   No

5. There is a time of fellowship during the morning worship service. Do you fellowship with the visitors? Yes   No

b. Do you fellowship with them after service? Yes   No

6. Please consider this statement: Some members talk among themselves in groups or cliques when there is a misunderstanding or concern about the ministry instead of talking to the pastor. Yes   No

7. Please consider this statement: Church responsibilities are shared among the members, for example, church maintenance, and auxiliary leadership. Agree   Disagree

8. How many worship services did you attend at Triumphant in Christ International Ministries since January 4, 2015? _____ (Sunday School, Sunday morning worship, Sunday evening worship

9. Have you tithed consistently (at least once a month) in the past year or since you have been a member of this church?   Yes   No

10. Have you given offerings consistently (at least once a month) in the past year or since you have been a member of this church?   Yes   No

11. How many people or families have you invited to Triumphant in Christ International Ministries in the past six months? _____

12. Please check the ministry in which you have participated in the past year. Check all that apply.

[ ] Nursing Home

[ ] Prison Ministry

[ ] Youth Ministry

[ ] Women's Ministry

[ ] Men's Ministry

[ ] Music Ministry

13. Do you believe your spirit, soul, and body are being nurtured and strengthened by the ministry? Yes   No

14. Please consider this statement: There is a sense of excitement among members about our church's future. Agree   Disagree

15. Which of the following best describes your understanding of evangelism:

[ ] Evangelism is praying and seeking the will of God.

[ ] Evangelism is sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with the unsaved only.

[ ] Evangelism is sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with the saved and unsaved.

[ ] Evangelism is a five-fold ministry

APPENDIX C

POST-SURVEY

A MODEL OF RENEWAL FOR A NEIGHBORHOOD CHURCH

POST-TEST FOR KINGDOM BUILDERS CLASS

Date: _____

Gender: Female   Male

Age Range: under 18   19-24   25-34   35-45   46-58   58-70   70 and above

1. How do you want Triumphant in Christ International Ministries to be perceived in the community?

2. Do you believe that our church can make an impact on our community? Yes   No

   Please explain:

3. Please consider the statement: It is easy to summarize for visitors and non-members

how our congregation differs from other congregations in the area. Yes   No

4. Please consider the statement: In the past month I have contacted a member who has

not attended church in a month or more to check on his or her well-being and to let the

member know he or she is missed. Yes   No

5. There is a time of fellowship during the morning worship service. Do you fellowship with the visitors? Yes   No

b. Do you fellowship with them after service? Yes   No

6. Please consider this statement: Some members talk among themselves in groups or cliques when there is a misunderstanding or concern about the ministry instead of talking to the pastor. Yes   No

7. Please consider this statement: Church responsibilities are shared among the members, for example, church maintenance, and auxiliary leadership. Agree   Disagree

8. How many worship services did you attend at Triumphant in Christ International Ministries from February 8, 2015 to March 29, 2015? _____ (Sunday School (7), Sunday morning worship (7), Sunday evening worship (2), Tuesday Bible study (3)

9. Have you tithed at Triumphant in Christ International Ministries from February 8, 2015 to March 29, 2015? ..Yes   No

10. Have you given offerings at Triumphant in Christ International Ministries from February 8, 2015 to March 29, 2015?   Yes   No

11. How many people or families have you invited to Triumphant in Christ International Ministries from February 8, 2015 to March 29, 2015? _____

12. Please check the ministry in which you have participated in from February 8, 2015 to March 29, 2015. Check all that apply.

[ ] Nursing Home

[ ] Prison Ministry

[ ] Youth Ministry

[ ] Women's Ministry

[ ] Men's Ministry

[ ] Music Ministry

13. Do you believe your spirit, soul, and body are being nurtured and strengthened by the ministry? Yes   No

14. Please consider this statement: There is a sense of excitement among members about our church's future. Agree   Disagree

15. Which of the following best describes your understanding of evangelism:

[ ] Evangelism is praying and seeking the will of God.

[ ] Evangelism is sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with the unsaved only.

[ ] Evangelism is sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with the saved and unsaved.

[ ] Evangelism is a five-fold ministry

What do you think we need to do now?

Thank you for your participation and valuable input.

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